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To the President's Office
From Caleb Davies
1931



PRESSING PROBLEMS OF THE
CLOSING AGE



Christabel Pankhurst

Camera Portrait by Hugh Cecil.]

[Frontispiece.]

PRESSING PROBLEMS OF THE CLOSING AGE

BY

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FOREWORD BY THE REV.

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FOREWORD

THOUGH I have not had the opportunity of a careful study of the following pages, my personal acquaintance with the Authoress and her previous widely-circulated Book enables me with sincere pleasure to contribute this Foreword.

It is generally admitted that perilous times are imminent. Their proximity is heralded, as Christ said it would be, "by wars and tumults, by famines and pestilences, by great earthquakes and signs from heaven." The mystery of lawlessness doth already work; and the strenuous efforts which are being made by far-seeing statesmen, in the direction of Peace and Goodwill, give evidence of their awareness of the perils that menace civilisation.

The professing Church, in the present crisis, has her own perplexities to face. It is with difficulty that she is holding her own against dangers within and without; and sometimes it is said by watchers that they have heard again those voices which, with the rustling of wings, were heard in the Temple on the night before it fell, saying, "Let us

depart.” Because iniquity abounds, the love of many is waxing cold.

In the meanwhile, the Jewish question, both in Palestine and in the world at large, is developing in the manner Scripturally foreshown.

Every sign, therefore, which Christ gave of His Return, is already present, and it is surely befitting that the strongest possible appeal should be made to the slumbering Church and the indifferent world. That it should be disregarded, “as it was in the days of Noah,” does not, however, absolve us from our duty. Such is the message of this Book.

F. B. MEYER,

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PRESSING PROBLEMS OF THE CLOSING AGE

I

INTRODUCTORY

WHAT is coming upon the world? The existing order is threatened by the assaults of its critics and by strange disruptive tendencies, operating from within.

Thinking people are moved to search out the meaning of it all. The shallow optimism of yesterday has vanished. Some of us used to imagine that the world must and would get better and better under the treatment of its many reformers. That illusion perished during the war.

Movements for reform and progress were once our hope! Now these are largely overwhelmed by movement of another kind—movement uncontrollable, incalculable, shaking the social and international system as would an earthquake.

Sin-stained and tear-stained as the existing order is, the thought of its downfall might not alarm, but for the ominous signs of what is, humanly speaking, to follow.

With a really tragic opportuneness, experts are

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now digging up the relics of dead and buried civilisations of the past.

We moderns are compelled to read the lesson of these dead civilisations. They, doubtless, seemed to the people who were part of them, quite as likely to last and to improve as our own civilisation seemed to us—until just lately !

The openers of King Tutankhamen's tomb maintain that the discovery and utilisation of steam, electricity and the like, and the science of medicine, are "the only real advantages that modern civilisation may claim over that of the Ancients," and that "culture in the way of intellectual development and the arts in general was, in those ancient times, in many ways higher than it is to-day."

From Mesopotamia we hear of the excavation, at Kish, of ruins of enormous extent, showing an important civilisation dating from far-off millennia and long since extinct.

Another object-lesson is unearthed at Knossos in Crete, the traditional site of the Palace of Minos, known to the ancient Greeks as the Labyrinth. Excavation has disclosed a magnificent palace, roads, viaducts, inns, pottery showing a high level of arts and crafts, seals and tablets indicating an organised system of government, gems, signs of fashion in dress, domestic architectural grandeurs—all proving clearly that Crete, the leading power in the Ægean, was politically, socially and artistically very highly developed.

Strange, uncanny and menacing to the world-system of to-day is the doom of these older systems.

Human society does not, we see, move onward and upward in a straight ascending line, nor even in an ascending spiral. It would be truer to say that it moves in a series of vicious circles.

A civilisation reaches a certain point, decays from within, is attacked from without, and finally dies. Another civilisation then rises to its height, and, like its predecessors, dies. History is the record of this process often repeated.

What does it mean? The question is vital, is urgent for us to-day, because the world-crisis is rapidly developing and will affect each individual life and every nation even more directly and far more seriously than did the late war. For our guidance, from day to day, we must have, here and now, a true science, a true philosophy of history. The Bible alone gives us this. It shows us a world at variance with God, and world-civilisation decaying and dying in consequence.

The Bible demonstrates that according to every test successively applied by God to humanity, humanity has failed, and especially according to the last and greatest test of all, that of faith in, and love and fidelity to, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His Son, God has spoken to and manifested Himself to mankind, with the intent that they shall honour the Son even as they should honour the Father, and shall give their allegiance to the Son as King of kings and Lord of lords.

“Halt!” some will cry at this point. “You cite the Bible as your authority: we do not accept its authority.” Pray, why not? Sceptics should at least approach the Bible with a fresh

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and open mind, forgetting in particular the attacks upon it by the critics of the last century, whose archaic scientific notions were in themselves sufficient to disqualify them to contradict Scripture. The further we emerge from the scientific twilight of the Nineteenth Century, the more clearly can the truth of the Bible be perceived. But, after all, it is an inward illumination that is most needed for the understanding of this wondrous Book ! For “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.”¹ God does give the illumination of His Spirit to the mind of those who, discovering the insufficiency of human knowledge, turn to His own Word to learn what can be learned nowhere else.

Rebellion, ages old, against God, is now coming to a head, taking the form of resistance to the supremacy of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, who, despite the humility and selflessness He showed in His merciful errand of the Cross, is mighty in creation and, as we are told, “ *upholds all things by the word of His power.*”²

“ The word of His power ” ! There we get the very secret of creation. To-day, science (some twenty centuries after the Apostle was inspired to write these words) is testifying, as far as it is qualified to do so, that the Universe is, and must be, maintained in being by the Word of Power.

Thus every advance in research into the constitution of matter, discloses power, energy,

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

² Heb. i. 3.

amazingly rapid, ordered motion. The atom, although infinitesimal in size, is not a simple particle, but comparable to a miniature solar system, consisting of electrons revolving with tremendous rapidity round a central nucleus. Indeed the expression, the "astronomy of the atom," is now in use.

The earth, the human body itself, exist by reason of this motion. Should it cease, they would, on the instant, cease too. If He who upholds all things by the word of His power, should deny the Creation, earth and sun and moon and stars would vanish. Were He to revoke the Word of Power that sustains it, the Universe would be no more. He has but to withdraw the divine fiat: "Let there be——" and there will not be. He has but to say NO, and the Creation is gone.

And this is He whose supremacy in the affairs of this small world is denied! No wonder there is a world-crisis and an oncoming chaos!

The continuous outpouring of purposeful energy by which the Creation continues in being, from moment to moment, proceeds from a personal God.

Obviously! Personality is not limiting. Say that a fellow-creature has "no personality" and you condemn him as a nonentity. Personality connotes loftiness, profundity, strength, wisdom. "A great personality"; it is the finest tribute we can pay to a man. All this argues that personality, raised to the highest power, is the attribute of the Godhead.

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Now the fulness of the Godhead is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ ("for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"¹) who is God manifest in the flesh. He is the personal God with whom we have to do. "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him."

The explanation of the world's unrest is to be found in the world's denial of the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. The key to the whole mystery of present and future world-conditions is the Biblical announcement that God "hath purposed in Himself, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him."²

The powerful, glorious return to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ will take place in accordance with this purpose. This mighty happening is—with the first Advent and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus—the central theme of the Bible.

Perhaps His supremacy is resisted only in this part of the Universe; but in a Universe where law is order, harmony, can that be tolerated? Evidently not. This is relatively a very little world, but from a tiny cause may proceed a great evil. A disease germ, so small that it passes through the filter of the bacteriologist, if it invades the human body, can bring it down to death.

Human revolt against the Son of God has its superhuman counterpart in the unseen. The reality of the unseen world and its inhabitants is very widely discussed and believed in these

¹ Col. ii. 9.

² Eph. i. 9, 10.

times, and by some who may not realise that resistance to the will of God and to the person and pre-eminence of His Son exists there.

This world-order is condemned root and branch. And why should it not be condemned? Even its human authors have little to say in its defence, when tried even by merely human standards. In the sight of God (Who can say that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts and ways higher than human thoughts and ways) the existing world-order is a terrible offence.

The writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast pronounced upon his régime a sentence of doom which was swiftly executed. The writing addressed to the people of this Age has been a long time written on the wall, but some say that they cannot see it yet, in spite of the marvellous distinctness it has taken on of late.

I am deeply sorry for those in responsible positions who, having the means of knowing so well all the dangers that overhang the present and future, can, if their eyes are open, see the impending doom, but have not yet discovered that in the prophecies of the Bible all is foreknown and foretold. There they will find set forth, not the evil only, but also the divine remedy which will be applied when the Lord Jesus Christ, upon His visible appearing, puts down rebellion and institutes His own reign and rule.

"Incredible," say those who have not yet given serious study to prophecy, both as converted into history and as prediction of things still to come.

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One thing is surely more incredible, and that is that this world-system should recover from the disease which has proved fatal to those of ancient time. A human-made civilisation can no more avoid perishing than can the natural human beings who constitute it. How could we ever have thought otherwise ?

We believers in Bible prophecy are not to be moved by accusations of pessimism. Some people complain of "Jeremiads," but Jeremiah's warnings were confirmed by the event. A Cassandra, one may be called, but Cassandra was in the right of it.

There was one Huldah, a prophetess, who, as Scripture tells, gave to the king of Judah this message : "Thus saith the Lord : Behold I will bring evil upon this place and upon all the inhabitants thereof . . . because they have forsaken Me." This confirmed the warnings given through earlier prophets—and all was fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity.

So it is not whether a warning is palatable that matters, but whether it is true.

How can calamity be averted, is a question often asked. Nineveh of old tried the plan of crying mightily unto God, and thus succeeded. "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God ; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." ¹

A whole people once went unscathed in an hour of doom because they sheltered under the blood of a slain lamb, itself prophetic of the Son of

¹ Ezek. xviii. 32.

God crucified, whom the world is soon to see crowned. Those who desire safety, whether for individuals or for nations, should ponder this thought.

The supreme purpose and great longing of Almighty God is the vindication and the glorification of His Son.

Be it remembered that the sequel to the humiliation and death by crucifixion of the Son is this: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." ¹

¹ Phil. ii. 9-11.

PART I

SOME MODERN PROBLEMS IN THE
LIGHT OF BIBLE PROPHECY

II

REBELLION AGAINST GOD

WHEN will be the next war ? is what people are asking, or secretly thinking. For we all know, even if we do not admit it, that more war is coming. Indeed, we even wonder why it has not broken out before now.

The late war was not the war to end war, and a Prime Minister of those days has lately summed up the present situation in this way :

“ The world has not changed—it has not learnt a syllable of its terrible lesson. Suspicions among nations exist just as ever, only more intense; hatred between races, only fiercer; combinations forming everywhere for the next war, great armies drilling, conventions and compacts for joint action when the tocsin sounds; general staffs meeting to arrange where they should march, how they should march, and where they should strike when they march; little nations only just hatched, just out of the shell, struggling under the burden of great armaments, and marching along towards unknown battlefields; new machinery of destruction and slaughter being devised and manufactured with feverish anxiety; every day science being brought under contribution to discover new methods to destroy human life—in fact, a deep-laid and powerfully concerted plot against civilisation, openly organised in the light of the sun.”

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And all that, as this statesman exclaims, is happening so short a time after the greatest war that the world, so far, has ever known.

War preparations are far more in evidence now than ever they were in pre-war days, and are greater and more terrible.

Inventors are promising "death rays," and who knows what other horror. Governments eagerly compete for the knowledge thereof. A professor of chemistry, an adviser to the British Government on chemical warfare during the late struggle, has given warning that : "Gas in the next war will be far more deadly than in the last."

An expert who advises the American Government says : "In future warfare we shall have at our disposal vastly more powerful and incomparably more destructive weapons than have been available hitherto. Among other things, we have the possibilities of radio to consider. Radio, we should realise, is as yet in its infancy. It is entirely conceivable that we may learn how to cause destruction on a wholesale scale by liberating the energy of atoms. To do that we must find out how to break them up. Hitherto, we have got no farther than the breaking up of molecules, yet even by that means a tremendous destructive power can be developed. Is it not possible to imagine that in future wars it might be practicable by radio to disintegrate atoms over a large area, from a great distance, and, by effecting their sudden decomposition, to engender locally a disturbance far exceeding in magnitude the most destructive thunderstorm? Such an attack,

transmitted by ether waves, might wipe out a city or virtually annihilate an army at one stroke."

These are but two among the men of science who are prophesying unspeakable disaster to humanity if science continue to be used for destruction. They express the hope that this abuse will cease, but the facts prove their hope to be ill-founded.

War in the air and war under the sea were the new scientific possibilities, only beginning to be exploited when the last war ended. Submarines and aircraft are chief features of war preparations now. Nations dare not be left behind in the race. It was arranged that the British Army exercises for 1924 should be utilised to test new death-dealing inventions, and to practise methods of using them. The military correspondent of the London *Times*, in anticipation of these exercises, wrote of inventions such as the new mechanical "dragons," and went on to say :

"What about poison gas? It is true that agreements have been come to with certain nations to debar its use in war, but not with all of them, and it is an interesting point, that the nations most active in promoting such agreement, are also experimenting with the most deadly forms of gas and freely advertising the fact."

A horrible prospect is opened up by the same writer in these words :

"We have been told by many air-specialists, though not by those in official positions, that the

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ultimate object in war being to compel an enemy nation to give in, this object can best be attained by direct action from the air against the civil population of crowded industrial centres. If so, the work of 'ground troops' in war would be merely of secondary importance. . . . Then again, if direct action by aircraft against civilians is accepted as the most effective form of warfare, does the same apply to direct action by armies ? ”

Well may the same writer exclaim, “ Are we going back to the Middle Ages ? ”

No, it is worse than that. The world is going on to the yet lower standards and more evil practices of the Time of the End. It is plunging into the scientific barbarism which will mark the end of this Age. Already in the late war, this scientific barbarism was showing itself and was striking at civilian populations. There was an agonised reluctance at such methods in many quarters. But since unarmed populations were actually being attacked, the argument for retaliatory defence was felt to be strong, and nowadays the military experts of the various nations are freely predicting that in future warfare “ it is against urban agglomerations that the belligerents will be infuriated, because the large towns are the nerve centres of nations ; that the women, old people and children will be attacked because they are employed in producing war materials ; and that towns and villages behind the lines will see poisoned clouds descending upon them from the sky.”

Even though attacks upon civilian populations

were never recommended by experts, and never generally adopted as part of military policy, what guarantee is there that such attacks will not be made by some army or armies in the next war? The horrible, unforeseen development of war methods between 1914 and 1918 is a warning to expect that in the heat of the next war all rules and restraints will be overthrown. What will prevent, in a mad rush for conquest at any price, the outbreak of fierce slaughter, by an air and land army, of civilian populations?

Bombs cast from the noiseless aeroplane whose successful test has been announced, the deathly gas, the long guns and other new resources, will fully empower an army for massacre of the most modern kind!

The frightfulness of future warfare being so obvious, we need to know whether more warfare will occur. I have already made bold to say that there will be war, and that everybody knows it, whether they will admit it or not.

Almighty God tells us that so long as this Age lasts there will be war, and therefore we must believe it, even though the nations were now in perfect peace and friendship.

But they are not! Conflicting ambitions, inter-racial and international, are very intense. Moreover, political dissension within the various nations is so acute, goes so deep, that civil war may break out. That is war in a dreadful form, and it may easily lead to international war. The menace of war persists. Perhaps actual fighting may be postponed. Certain demands, which

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would otherwise be enforced by war, may be yielded to because those upon whom they are made dare not risk an armed resistance, or do not even realise what yielding will result in later. An illusion of peace may enwrap the world, cloaking for a time the sinister developments that are really taking place and the hideous future that is being prepared.

Nothing is more talked of than war and how to cure it, but much less is said about its ultimate cause.

Human lust for power is the cause of war. Power of what sort? Why, power over mankind! The mighty conquerors of antiquity—their aim was the mastery of the world. Napoleon in later times waged wars in the hope of being the world's monarch. The Kaiser's war-cry, too, was: World mastery or downfall—*Herrschaft oder Niedergang!* The same cause that produced these past great wars is waiting now to produce another war, greater than all the rest.

A superman will contrive to exploit the ambition of a people or to magnetise a people to hero-worship of himself; and he will, from small beginnings, pursue a career of world-conquest similar to the careers of supermen who have preceded him down the centuries.

Such international warfare is simply the earthward expression of the belligerency which, in its heavenward expression, is war against God.

This will be proven when the prophesied Man of Sin appears upon the scene. He will be the last of the human pretenders to world-dominion

which this Age will know. His frightful lust for power will express itself in the subjugation of mankind, and the usurpation of world-sovereignty. His ruling passion will be to seize for himself the throne and dominion which are the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By military conquest, by political dictatorship, by economic monopoly—and worse still by spiritual tyranny and the exploitation of human nature's disloyalty to God, this prophesied last of the Cæsars will gain and will hold for a time the Empire of the world. He, this worst of war-mongers, will even establish a semblance of peace, for after conquest has done its work for him, his iron hand will repress resistance to his rule, and having made a desert in which dwells no righteousness, and in which his evil will is law, he will call it peace.

Even this will not last, and the final war will follow—Armageddon. It will be essentially a war against God. Not only will those on earth whom God cherishes be assailed, but Armageddon will be a war against the returning Jesus.

"Unthinkable!" you say. Not at all! By that time the prophetic signs of the Lord's coming will be so pronounced, that even the Man of Sin will be wholly convinced that the Lord Jesus is, as the world's true King, about to appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.¹

So the Man of Sin and his hosts will resolve to fight to prevent this return of the Lord from heaven.

¹ Matt. xxiv. 3.

“Impossible!” you insist. “A total impossibility! How could any human potentate, however powerful in earthly affairs, ever think himself able to make war against the Lord Jesus?” But this usurper will think it a possibility. In a very short time from now, science will have progressed far beyond even its present stage. Radio, the liberation of atomic energy, the utilisation of solar heat, the discovery of new means yet undreamt of, will put at the service of the Man of Sin the power, as he will suppose, to drive back into heaven, if not even to destroy, the Son of God.

Remember, too, that psychic, Satanic power will be at the usurper’s command. Thus, doubly armed and fortified, he will commit his final, monstrous act of rebellion against God.

This crime of Armageddon will be the last battle in the age-long, human resistance to the decreed supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, until whose coming there will, He Himself has forewarned us, be wars and rumours of wars.

III

THE IDEAL OF PEACE

“**P**EACE, peace, where there is no peace.”

Let us, with all our love for world-peace—and how one recoils from the very thought of another war!—beware of coming under the condemnation meted out to prophets who proclaim peace where that blessing is not to be found. Let us strictly refrain from raising false hopes, by letting our longing for peace prompt us to say to the people, as said the false prophets of old: “Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.”

An impression of that kind was spread abroad before the late war, and a frightful awakening followed. From how many hearts, during that war, which was “impossible,” even “unthinkable,” until it happened, arose the cry: “We looked for peace and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble”?¹

After that excruciating disappointment, it is a duty to build no more card-houses of peace upon foundations of sand. The yearning for heart-peace and world-peace is right and beautiful. But where is the hope of peace? There is positively no human hope of peace. Human effort will

¹ Jer. xiv. 19.

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never maintain peace on earth. Think of the work towards peace in pre-war days. The peace plans of those days are a total loss. They neither prevented nor even softened the worst war in history. Their failure shows that more is needed than international machinery to restrain the bellicose passions of human nature.

What is there in the after-war peace plans, which Sisyphean labourers are now rolling uphill, that makes them any more hopeful than the earlier plans that failed? These new peace plans have the same weakness as the old ones. Then is there any new factor in the world-situation which will work success instead of failure? There is no such factor—indeed, the situation is far more unfavourable to peace than it was before the war.

What human agency is there which is able to realise our ideal of world-peace? There is no such agency.

Something has been expected of Disarmament Conferences. The one held at Washington meant well, attempted a good deal—but by this time its result seems to be thought insufficient, to say the least. Another Disarmament Conference on the opposite side of the ocean has broken down. At the time of writing a great Disarmament Conference is expected to meet in Geneva in June 1925.

Besides, disarmament is but relative. If all the nations disarmed far beyond the furthest limit suggested by the most peaceable statesman, the power to fight would still exist, as it did in the far-away days of galleys and of bows and arrows. It will be worse still, if some nations disarm and

others do not disarm, or even arm the more. Again, there seem to be at least as many ways of driving a coach and four through a disarmament agreement as through an Act of Parliament. And, anyhow, what is economised by disarming in some directions, seems to be available for expenditure on new and unrestricted and perhaps more deadly modes of armament.

Security and the arbitration of disputes between nations are, with disarmament, to be laid before the Geneva Conference. A careful examination of the whole plan as disclosed up to date, impresses one anew with the impossibility of chaining up the dogs of war by conventional bonds.

The warmongers will prove to be appallingly clever at taking advantage of the judicial delays incident to arbitration. They will cunningly foment and exploit differences of opinion among League members respecting the merits of the dispute, and will outdo the wolf of fable in his accusation of his weaker victim. And if at last judgment goes against the aggressor, the difficulty will not be small of rallying the nations, to employ their reduced armaments in concerted and vigorous naval and military action against him. Already the cry is heard that nations must not be too strictly bound to coerce another nation that starts an aggressive war !

A League of Nations, with peace as its main objective, is now in being and, in some form, will exist until the end of this Age. But political experience tells us that it is unlikely to be governed as at present with its quasi-Parliamentary system :

it cannot make rapid decisions and give them immediate, powerful effect. The personal dictatorship, which individual nations are beginning to experience, will be established in the international sphere also, and that before long.

Some who read this may dissent. Assuming that they were right and that the present multi-headed management were to continue and were to enable the League to control world affairs, then the League would become a Super-State. At once would be felt the same fatal lack of wisdom, and there would be the inevitable degeneracy of absolute power when exerted by human rulers, even though there be a group of nations over those who cannot escape from the field of its operation.

"Well, then, the Churches must do something!" is the watchword and very last hope of many who have come to realise that these other aforementioned agencies are doomed to fail. The Churches are adjured to put forth the whole of their united strength to avert catastrophe. "In a Continent, nominally Christian," they are told, "the Churches surely are not impotent."

Can the Churches do what is hoped of them in this matter of peace? They cannot! To begin with, even if they had all the imaginable potency in Europe as "a Continent nominally Christian," remember that there is Asia, not even "nominally Christian," to be reckoned with, in this matter of peace and war. The Churches could not for one moment be held responsible for restraining any possible aggression from Asia.

But more than that debars the Churches from responding to the challenge. Some elements among them, indeed, are trying to respond. There are those who ask that no Christian shall fight, though it be in defence of his country and to repel an invader, much less in aid of a foreign country unjustly attacked.

But suppose the Christians of some lands did not observe this rule against fighting, while the Christians of other lands did? How thus could the pacifist behaviour of Christians prevent non-Christians from going to war?

The Lord Jesus Christ foretold wars and rumours of wars throughout this Age. He has not commissioned the Church, and has not empowered the Church, to establish international peace. He knows that His own compelling presence and the direct use of His own mighty power are needed for that task.

How could the Church, during our Lord's absence, overcome the foes of peace?

Mr. Lloyd George pointed to one of these foes of peace when he recently asked: "Was the Devil numbered among the slain in the last war? I have never seen his name in any casualty list."

Yes, as Mr. Lloyd George reminds us, "There is in the background the sinister figure of that force for mischief which used to be known by our Puritan forefathers as the Devil."

It is high time that the present generation recovered the knowledge of the existence and personality of "that sinister force for mischief, the Devil," a knowledge imparted most clearly

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and emphatically by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Biblical prophecy affirms that not until Satan is under restraint will there be peace, and obviously he who is the prime author and instigator of resistance to the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot as a superhuman creature be bound by human agency.

The second enemy of peace is just human nature, which, to borrow and adapt Mr. Lloyd George's phrasing, God has given up in despair for it is "unteachable." But as humanity, though unteachable, is yet redeemable "with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,"¹ how can any political leader serve better than by telling this good news to the public, at the present time, when all the signs are showing the great world-crisis and the return of Christ to be imminent.

A statesman, weary of seeking peace where he knows in advance there is no peace, can have relief and joy in discovering and declaring that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to establish peace on earth. Hail, then, the Prince of Peace! No symbol He! Not alone the invisible out-pouring of the Spirit have we now to expect, but the actual, visible, literal appearing of the Lord Jesus as Peace Incarnate.

The prophet, long before the incarnation, wrote thus of how He will establish world-peace: "He will rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their

¹ 1 Pet. i. 19.

spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”¹

What a word of comfort ! “ Neither shall they learn war any more.” That is what we want to know, that neither shall the nations even learn how to make war any more ! There is the perfect plan of peace ! Even better : its Author can make it live and triumph, for He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, at His coming, will prove Himself “ able to subdue all things unto Himself.”²

¹ Isa. ii. 4.

² Phil. iii. 21.

I V

THE CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

EVEN the democratic system of government is not escaping the subversive influences of the time. "To make the world safe for democracy." How often, from 1914 to 1918, that war-cry was heard in the camp of the Allies. Pathetic attempt to explain the struggle which was and remains inexplicable save by Biblical teaching!

Another human miscalculation. The war hastened rather than hindered—much less averted—the doom of democracy.

Yes, the doom of democracy! For democracy is challenged now, in quarters the most unlikely, so that we may pronounce it wounded in the house of its friends.

The present rulers of Russia, declaring themselves champions of the proletariat, have broken with the democratic method of government. They act on the principle that government, though it be of and for the people, need not be *by the people*. Thus the present masters of Russia have boldly proclaimed and maintain their own dictatorship. Their admirers and would-be imitators, in other lands, are apparently likeminded in their determination "to rule the people for the people's good," with or without the people's consent.

In all lands the democratic system has ever had its opponents on the political Right. Now on the Left it is challenged too. Thus strangely do we find the "Reactionary" and the "Red" on common ground, though differing in all else.

Then Fascismo has also to be considered. The Fascist claims to be at once conservative and progressive, and above all things bent upon saving the people, if need be, from the people. He avowedly will pursue his purpose in accordance with, or in spite of, the democratic system. If democracy gets in his way, so much the worse for democracy ! He regards it as a mode of government which must, in the present and in the future, justify itself by practical results, or go. Mussolini, the author of Fascismo, has thus expressed himself to a newspaper representative who asked him : " You are accused of being anti-democratic. How do you propose to rebut this accusation ? What do you consider the principal weaknesses of the democratic system ? And how do you think they can be cured ? "

" This is a point which I want you to understand," he said. " I have never asked myself that question because a universal conception of democracy does not exist. There exist, and have existed, States which glorify themselves with the title democratic, but every one of them—Athens, Venice, Britain, the United States—has in its history novelties so absolutely distinct that nothing has ever seemed to me so grotesque as an attempt to reduce them to a common measure.

" To create a type of democracy, historically

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speaking, there can be no such thing as democratic or anti-democratic. I have been against the phenomenon of a parliamentary democracy which has corrupted and weakened the Italian State, and threatened its very life, less violently but not less fatally than any Socialist scheme of revolution."

That is definite enough, but Mussolini's deeds have been still more definite than his words, and will be yet more so in the future, we may be sure, if he thinks it needful.

Russia and Italy, from their wholly opposite starting-points, give us the most pronounced cases that have yet arisen of the supersession of democracy. But this is not peculiar to Russia and Italy. A tendency in this direction is now so general as to provoke one observant American to write of the "Receding Tide of Democracy," and under this heading to descant upon "The profound reaction against democracy," and to say :

"Democracy has lost immense territories and its position has been visibly weakened in territories which it nominally retains, withal it seems to have lost ground in the confidence of mankind."

One very pertinent fact is that democracy is not, in this time of testing of human institutions, proving itself to be the sure means to public welfare that we, its partisans, once believed it to be. That it is the best of all *human* methods of government, I, for one, am sure—but how far from good it is turning out to be! Why? We are,

indeed, discovering the democratic ideal to be chimerical. Attempts to translate it into practice are degenerating into, or in the direction of, caucus rule, or some sort of anarchy, or a personal dictatorship. Russia, Italy, Spain are not the only cases in point; constitutional incoherence, political deadlock, are showing themselves among peoples accounted as more constitutional in character and habit. Recently we saw France involved in a strange constitutional conflict. This conflict was between a political leader whom the recent French elections and subsequent party deliberations had designated as the choice of the French people for Premier, and another political leader who, by the vote of the same people, was previously elected as President of the French Republic, for a term still unexpired.

Such situations excite many and profound reflections upon the inconsistency, and, in these times, the positive danger of the practical working of Republican democracy as it exists in France.

In Britain, too, though a conflict of opinion or authority between two democratically-elected Rulers is an impossibility owing to the existence of our limited monarchy and the concentration of power in Prime Ministerial hands, we are beginning to discover possibilities, formerly almost unsuspected, of constitutional deadlock. Once upon a time, the two-party system (disturbed though it was by the manœuvres of the Irish Nationalists) might have seemed part and parcel of our Constitution, the "Ins" and the "Outs"—Government and Opposition—the two great

political parties succeeding each other, turn by turn! Now, three political parties stand in the room of those two, and no one of the three, so far, can gain a clear majority of the people's votes. England, they say, hates coalition, and so even in the Mother of Parliaments the rule of a minority prevails, while two other minority groups watch, wait and wonder what will happen next. For the complexity of national and world conditions is finding its reflection in divided policies within the political parties, and not least within the Labour Party. As everyone knows, there is in the Labour ranks a section, of extreme opinions and intense activity, which is prepared to supplement the constitutional method of the vote by resorting to industrial or other direct action to achieve its purposes. The existing Labour Government was early confronted by manifestations of industrial unrest. Whatever the merits of the particular disputes, it is certain that the political extremists in the Labour Party would be the last to disclaim a share in the propagation of industrial unrest.

So, all things considered—and these things include the perplexity and disillusionment of many average citizens—democratic government in Britain certainly does not promise to fulfil the hopes reposed upon it by the men and women who strove to establish, or to extend and confirm it.

The American people, more than any other, have done reverence to the principle of democracy. Not that the United States has been free from admitted political corruptions and abuses. Ameri-

cans themselves have freely admitted the existence of these evils, ascribing them to the particular faultiness of certain human elements concerned. But to-day, the system of democratic government is being called in question as never before. Its adequacy to fulfil national requirements is coming into serious doubt. The block system, which may or may not become a feature of British Parliamentary conditions, was denounced by the late President Harding as being a menace to America's national life, because, so he declared, legislation by blocks is based upon selfish interests and therefore contrary to the sound principle that legislation can be for the public good only when it is based upon the public welfare.

In the United States, too, the phenomenon is not unknown of the President, owing his authority to the choice of the people, finding himself opposed by the legislators who are representatives of the very same people. This possibility was assuredly foreseen by the makers of the United States Constitution. What they perhaps did not foresee—it could not in those days have been understood, even if foreseen—was the acute embarrassment to other nations, the grave peril to the whole world that would be caused by variance between legislators and President. The nations of the world must know—it is fatal for them not to know—what the United States is going to do and whether what the President of the United States propounds as national policy, will finally prove to be so.

Now here we come to the very core of the whole

matter—to the deadly failing of the democratic system of government. It is this: whereas the world imperatively needs a sure and certain knowledge of the present and future policy of each individual nation: and whereas the world imperatively requires that these separate national policies shall be both stable instead of fluctuating, and harmonious the one with the other—yet under democratic government these desiderata are not, and in the nature of the case cannot be, fulfilled. Why? Because there is nothing more unknowable than the result of popular elections and the national policies dependent thereupon, and there is nothing more changeable than the popular will as expressed in election after election. The national leader returned to office by this year's popular vote, is, next year or sooner, and by the same popular vote, cast out of office. The policy, by him proposed and presumably by his nation approved, is utterly abandoned. The democracy of that land has so decreed! Yes, but another continent, the whole world perhaps, is thrown into confusion. The verdict of one people at one election, a verdict dictated perhaps by some minor issue, has knocked the key-stone out of the international arch. Thus a bridge, seeming, it may be, to promise the world at large a way to safety, an escape from war or from economic ruin, falls down, the nations relapsing into panic and peril.

The three countries whose policy imports most to the world, Great Britain, France and the United States, are precisely the countries whose

policy is, at this present time, the most incalculable and fluctuating, and this precisely because they, among the larger nations, are the most democratically governed !

How to make democracy safe for the world ! It cannot be done. Not that democracy is worse than any other system of government of human invention. Taken all in all, it is much better than others. The truth is that no human system ever will or ever can succeed. Non-democratic government has been tried and found intolerable. Human autocracy is always abused in the long run. Modern revivals of that system, however acceptable some may find them for a while as the alternative to disorder and ruin, will eventually become galling tyrannies, where they do not first collapse. Any human régime, whatever its nature, is perishable. History proves that. The world is now witnessing the decay of democracy. It fails and dies because of its inherent weaknesses as a system, degenerating as it does either into dictatorship or into a headless confusion.

But democracy is doomed still more because of human sin which would bring to naught even a perfect governmental machinery, if such could originate in the human mind.

Theocracy, that is the ideal, and that is the divine reality of the future—the rule of God ! That is the remedy for the failure of human rule of every form and in every age.

How should we dare to hope for so great a blessing for the world had we not, in the Scripture, the explicit promise of it given by the returning

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Lord Himself ? The many-times proven dangers of mere human attempts at government will be over when "the Kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Governor among the nations."¹

The announcement is plain : "The Lord shall be King over all the earth."²

No muddles, miscalculations, failures, tragic surprises, tyrannies, then ! The good citizen is the one who, with the Psalmist, cries out from the fulness of the heart : "It is time, Lord, for Thee to work !—Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down ! Be Thou exalted, Lord, in Thine own strength ; so will we sing and praise Thy power !"

All who care deeply enough about the ills of the world, must rejoice that "a King shall reign in righteousness." His rule will have every merit, including the consistency and continuity of policy which democracy cannot give ; the mercy and loving-kindness which human dictators have failed to show ; and above all the divine righteousness which is absent from every kind of human régime.

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in Princes." The coming King is one who cannot err, because He is "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."³ Nor is there any fear that He will, as human potentates would, abuse His omnipotence, because He is "the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us." Jesus, who, freely and

¹ Ps. xxii. 28.

² Zech. xiv. 9.

³ 1 Cor. i. 24.

unasked, offered Himself as the Lamb of God to be slain for the redemption of sinners, is the only One who can be trusted as Lord and King. There is no other and no others, who can be trusted with power.

Jesus, great God and Saviour, who put Himself at the mercy of cold and cruel human hearts and hands whose purpose He foresaw, who for the sake of sinners humbled Himself to be maltreated and put to the shameful death of the Cross—He is the God-King who has given the pledge of His sacrificial death that “justice and judgment shall be the habitation of His Throne and that mercy and truth shall go before His face.”¹

The world's Magna Charta was written on the Cross by King Jesus, and signed in His own Blood.

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 14.

V

THE VOTES OF WOMEN

VARIOUS reasons forbid us to expect that, when other means are failing to save the world-situation, the votes of women will succeed.

Some of us hoped more from woman suffrage than is ever going to be accomplished. My own large anticipations were based partly upon ignorance (which the late war dispelled) of the magnitude of the task which we women reformers so confidently wished to undertake when the vote should be ours. Even had one suspected, in the days of the struggle for the vote, how vastly is the task beyond human power, whether of women or men, one would still have been without a better hope because of the ignorance of or indifference to Bible prophecy, from which, grievous to say, some politicians have not, even now, freed themselves.

Now for the reasons why women, like men, will be unable to mend the world by their votes, and the same is true even though women-voters be in the majority! To begin with, the vote itself is going down in value like Russian roubles or German marks. Yes, the political currency of the franchise is seriously debased. The decay of democracy, treated in the last chapter, accounts for this. We never took it into our calculations in the pre-suffrage, pre-war days. The solidity

and permanency of representative government we took for granted, never doubting that constitutional democracy would be adhered to in the letter and in the spirit. Upon that depended, of course, all the worth the vote could possibly have. Arguing thus from false premises, we believed the vote would give to women a power, a practical influence upon events and conditions that it is not giving to them.

The rifle of a black-shirted Fascist, the industrial weapon of the striker, these are more potent in national affairs than the vote of a woman, and the balance is turning more against the vote as the days pass.

The receding tide of democracy cannot but leave the woman-voter high and dry. If sections of the electorate, armed with sufficient industrial or other extra-constitutional power, choose to depend upon that power rather than upon their constitutional weapon of the vote, they put the Constitution out of operation and invalidate the votes of the ordinary citizen. The trend toward such dictatorship is a prominent feature of present-day politics and must be taken into account by those women who are active in the political sphere.

Here is another, though different, point that we hardly took into consideration in the old days. As a by-product of the recent moves toward some sort of international government, the direct control of the elector over national policy is becoming weaker. The spokesmen of the nation, meeting in council with those of other nations, may be outvoted or otherwise committed to agreements

involving the country in a manner contrary to the wishes of the electors.

It may be thought that there is sufficient compensation for this diminution of the power of the vote, but it must be realised that as international government develops, the elector will be reduced more and more to a passive spectator of political events and will be less and less a controller thereof.

If that were all—but it is not ! The voters are faced by something much more formidable than the dictation of international conferences and councils. Now, as ever, and indeed more than ever, a foreign power can, by war methods, impose upon a people, in spite of their votes, a policy which, if it depended upon their votes, would never have been theirs. All the votes and all the voting of British women would not deter a hostile power from attack. It might even be that a would-be conqueror would view their vote for peace as an earnest of his success in war.

Here is the great tragedy of this votes-for-women situation ! The one great issue of general politics in which it was hoped that women citizens would accomplish something decisive and distinctive, is the one in which failure is the most conspicuous. With women in Great Britain holding the balance of voting power, never was the danger of war more threatening. This is not because of the women's vote, but it certainly is in spite of their vote.

War arises from passions and ambitions which do not yield to the influence of votes. Even did the votes of women avail to fetter the warmongers (if any) of their own country, they could not

restrain the warmongers of another country. So far it has proved that in belligerent nations whose women are enfranchised, the majority of the women-voters have supported the national policy of war.

Suffragists, in the days of their campaign, had not a doubt that the votes of women could and would bring about the pacification and harmonising of the world. The women's vote was to enable the solution of problems which the men, voting and ruling alone, left unsolved and treated as bones of contention.

Alas! it is not so simple as all that. Women in Britain and the United States—points of vast strategic importance politically—have much voting power, but where is their policy for world-regeneration? They have not got one.

Laudable aspirations toward better world-conditions are expressed. But as to a definite, practicable, successful policy—they, like the men, have none!

In this world-crisis, women are quite as unable as men are even to propound a saving policy, let alone carry it into effect. There is no individual woman who can invent the required policy, just as there is no man who can do so. The collective wisdom of women is proving as inadequate as that of men to invent such a policy. Platitudes and generalities, uttered whether by men or by women, will not serve—they may indeed do the disservice of encouraging a false sense of security.

What have women, more than men, to suggest as a settlement of the perennial discords in Christen-

dom? Still more deep-seated and fraught with complicated pros and cons is the issue between the Orient and the Occident. What is the women's solution of that mighty problem? There is not a women's solution.

Women are not of one mind on world problems, and there is no distinctive women's point of view concerning them. And if there were, it would still be true of women, as of men, that they have not the wisdom to devise the right policy. The power required is lacking too. Could women, as they cannot, tell the world what it is best to do in all these Age-old and now increasing and multiplying difficulties, there would still be the men to reckon with, and these might still prefer another and in their eyes better mode of action. Dead-lock!

And even assuming a human race coming of its own accord to unity of mind and purpose, regarding the issues now rending the race asunder and again asunder—even assuming that impossibility, shall we forget that the conflict is not between flesh and blood alone? The supernatural factor must not be ignored. Satanic intervention in the affairs of humankind, Satanic disturbance of world conditions is a fact. Also a fact is Satanic incitement to the godlessness which engenders violence, corruption and all the sins, the subtler as well as the cruder sins, whereby this world-order is made offensive to divine righteousness.

The evil being so largely supernatural as to its cause, how can the human effort of the woman-voter overcome it? It is impossible. The natural

power of men and women is no match for the supernatural power of the author of evil. The supernatural alone can challenge the supernatural, only the divine can conquer the Satanic.

So the new and ideal order cannot be, until the return of the divine King to establish God's Kingdom upon earth, which He will do, so we are assured, when He has put a stop to Satanic activity and made the will of God supreme among the nations of this earth, as it already is in heaven.

That glorious reign of Jesus, as we have it foretold in the Bible, puts one out of conceit with the most alluring ideals of reform ever conceived by the brain of man or woman. If women-voters could do all and more than all that ever was imagined by the most ardently hopeful among us—the reign and rule of the Lord Jesus Christ would be far better.

Those days of the suffrage campaign were the days of political childhood—now is the time to put away childish things, to abandon the childish, nay, foolish dream of a human-made Utopia, and in its stead hold fast, rejoicing, to the certainty that the Lord cometh, and that “of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever.”

Under His rule “the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”

That word righteousness! It marks the great

difference between human rule, even though based on the political equality of women, and the rule of Jesus, among whose royal names is this: "*The Lord our Righteousness.*" Human rule is not righteous rule—not even the rule of women-voters. Women have no defence to make against God's accusation: "There is none righteous, no not one, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Not a woman among us has any answer to make save this: "The blood of Christ was shed for me"; for while the unrighteousness of men and women has been declared, there has been manifested and offered them "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all who believe," God having set forth Jesus Christ, His Son, "to be a propitiation through faith in His blood . . . that He might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." ¹

In the duality of the mission of the Lord Jesus to humanity, we may find the answer to this oft-repeated question, "If it is true that failure awaits all human experiment, including even the experiment of votes for women—what must we do?" "Qualify to meet Him when He comes, to serve Him, to have a place in His confidence and a part in His glorious Kingdom. Tell others who will hear, that the Lord is coming, so that they may not be in the dark concerning His Advent. Do not trust in your own righteousness or your own efforts to attain it. Sceptical though

¹ Rom. iii.

you have been heretofore, and confident though you may be of your own sufficient merit in the eyes of God, consider now whether it is not prudent to take your stand with that other formerly self-righteous person, who finally was possessed with this desire: 'That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness . . . but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from the God of faith.'"

Some wise words of Mrs. Montagu, "The Queen of the Blues," whose letters have lately been published,¹ may here be quoted, since they bear upon the question of self-righteousness, in a manner enlightening to those of us who might be tempted to rely upon some efforts we may have made, with a view to the public welfare :

"Alas ! at the end of every day I am conscious that I am a most unprofitable servant. The relieving distressed objects, only so far as is consistent with enjoying all reasonable indulgences of one's inclination, cannot have any merit. It is merely following a good instinct. The discharge of painful duties has merit ; the struggling with strong passions and subduing them is also meritorious, resisting unlawful pleasures extremely so ; but my natural disposition, and the turn of my education and situation in life have made all these things easy, so that while I am towards the world called a virtuous person, I am void of merit in the eyes of Him who knows me and who gave me a temperament so little liable to violent transgressions."

¹ *Letters of Mrs. Montagu*, edited by Reginald Blunt.

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A greater and more famous woman, Queen Elizabeth, who, despite her calumniators, had more than most people whereof to glory before mankind (if only because of her faithfulness to the royal trust committed to her), nevertheless, in the prayers written in her own hand,¹ revealed her heart in prayer that may find an echo in some women's hearts to-day, when the kingdoms of this world are so soon to become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ :

“ I know my transgressions and the deeds I have wrought, but this also I know—that the greatness of my sins does not exceed the manifold long-suffering of my Saviour. For Thou didst not drive from Thee the sinful woman who approached Thee with tears, nor didst Thou reject the publican who repented, nor banish the thief who acknowledged Thy Kingdom, but these all upon their repentance Thou didst change into the place of Thy friends. Wherefore, confiding in Thy unspeakable goodness, I approach and pray Thee, Christ, my Lord, my Maker, my Deliverer, King of the Universe : Remit, forgive, be gracious and pardon me, a sinner and Thy unworthy servant, all my sins from my youth, whether committed in knowledge or in ignorance, in words or in deeds, against Thee ; sanctify me in soul and in body, in mind and in heart, and renew me wholly. . . . ”

“ I, here on earth, on bended knee, pour out my humble and repentant heart before Thee, pierced with deep sorrow for my many sins and errors,

¹ Reproduced in *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth*, collected by Frederick Chamberlain, F.R.Hist.Soc.

which, I confess, render me unworthy of eternal life, if not of the royal dignity. But because I feel and recognise that I am in reality possessed with the certain knowledge of Thy beloved Son and of Thee, fountain of life, I take courage, confiding in His merits alone. . . . Alas ! who could ever abide in Thy presence if his sins were not freely pardoned and all the righteousness and justice of Thy Christ imputed to him ! ”

Imputed righteousness—that is what the Queen of England needed to give her a standing before God. Perhaps others may decide that they need it too.

“ But what are we to *do* ? ” people want to know. The Lord Himself was asked : “ What shall we do that we might work the works of God ? ” Jesus answered and said unto them, “ This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on Him whom God hath sent.” ¹

“ Believe ” ? It is a particular infirmity of this generation that they find the importance of *belief*, of faith, hard to understand. Yet faith is infinitely more important than is action, commonly considered. For not only is faith the parent of action, of action which is valuable as fruit and evidence of a living faith—more than that, sheer faith is in itself, according to the reckoning of God, a fact and an act. By faith is expressed and measured our attitude towards God, and “ the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

¹ John vi., 28, 29.

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The believing heart is, by its very faith, in constant activity Godward. The supreme work for God is to believe in Him whom God hath sent and by whom He has spoken to us—in His Son who is the brightness of His Glory and the express image of His Person.¹

Faith in the Son is the primary and fundamental act of service to God: "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" When that first work of faith in Jesus is done, He gives His followers plenty of other works to do! Faith in Him is the foundation we must lay, for this reason also, that our faith is our act of acceptance of all that God offers to us in Christ Jesus—it is the opening of our heart to receive the Gift of God.

To the woman of Samaria, as He sat by the well, Jesus answered and said, as He is saying to every woman who does not yet put faith in Him: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." ²

Who would exchange the grandest of our old illusions concerning what the votes of women could do, for the assurance of what the Lord Jesus Christ will do in time and eternity?

¹ Heb. i. 3.

² John iv. 10, 14.

VI

THE LABOUR QUESTION

FROM what has been said in the last chapter, it follows, and with equal certainty, that no one class of men will succeed where other classes have failed, and that the Labour Party is as unable as its forerunners in office to manage the world's affairs aright.

The Labour Party is not, by the way, entirely composed of members of the working class. But even if it were, working men are not a separate species, they are exactly the same as other men. Change a lord's son and a labourer's son in their cradles, and no one would ever know it.

The distinctions between classes, such as they are, are merely superficial and due to difference in early feeding, training and general circumstances. These distinctions will disappear in measure as the working man raises his standard of living and becomes prosperous enough to attain to it. In that particular direction the Labour Party may be successful, for it is ever characteristic of a politically dominant group to secure for its members the maximum that is possible in the way of material wealth.

It is, however, much easier for a minority class to do that than for the working class forming a

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majority of the nation to do so. If the masses are to enter into the enjoyment of the prosperity they desire, available wealth must be increased, wholly constructive ideas will have to prevail, and the co-operation of the other elements in the community will have to be invoked. The earth is rich in natural resources. Scientists and inventors are, despite too much discouragement, untiring in their pursuit of means to make these resources available; industrial leaders and organisers are not wanting.

Employ those resources, with the methods and the new supplies of power discovered, utilise those inventions, enlist those leaders and organisers, bring to bear all the required labour energy—and the result will be wealth beyond the dreams of avarice for the masses, and that in much shorter working hours than at present.

Of course such a state of affairs could be realised only in the presence of harmony in the industrial sphere, and in the absence of war and rumours of war, and other national and world impediments and disorders. That is what Governments, one after the other, fail to ensure.

But assume for the moment that all the needful conditions were fulfilled and this increase and democratisation of prosperity came to pass, would that save the world? Of course not, for man does not live by bread alone. The attempt to apply an economic explanation and solution to the social and world problem is a failure.

A wealthy civilisation—even though wealth be equally distributed, can decay and fall as surely

as and more quickly than an impoverished civilisation. How many examples of this history provides ! Human nature is prone to abuse wealth. Much has been written regarding the luxuriousness of the Ancients, whose civilisations having decayed and collapsed are now but a memory. There is no assurance that modern civilisations, however free and equally wealthy their human constituents, will not follow the same courses. Already there are signs of pagan standards and conduct, which are ominously reminiscent of those dead civilisations and the evils that destroyed them. The point is that no Labour Government can regenerate human nature or even restrain its working, whether in the sphere of morals or of economics or of international relations. Nor can a Labour Government repress Satanic activity.

Some changes a Labour Government can attempt in economic conditions, but success, as we have seen, is dependent upon a general pacification, national and international.

Some change a Labour Government can make in the foreign policy of their country, only to discover that "the more it changes the more it is the same thing !"

The world's disease is far beyond their ability to cure. The same defects belong to a Labour Government as to every other human Government. Labourists are as completely wanting in the requisite wisdom and power as are Liberals or Conservatives. Their mistakes may be superficially different, but they are mistakes none the less.

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Before the British Labourists formed a Government, and thus got to close quarters with the problems they have since had to grapple with, they believed in their own power to solve them. Very soon Labour ministers began to have doubts upon the point. Industrial unrest, unemployment, the high cost of living, the housing problem, international discord—these the Labourists used to think were due to mismanagement by the other political parties and by the other classes in the community. Experiment has sufficiently proved that these difficulties persist under Labour rule, and that the methods of cure devised by Labourists are ineffectual. True, the first Labour Government has been able to plead shortness of time and want of a Parliamentary majority; but how could longer time produce a better result, and what more potent remedy would have been employed with the help of a Parliamentary majority? We have not heard anything on these points.

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown! Uneasy lies the head of a Prime Minister or President, adds every Prime Minister and President in these days. The burdens of office are becoming intolerable. There is no compensation of success. Statesmen, whether Labour or otherwise, are baffled; they are, in their heart of hearts, appalled by the difficulties of their situation. They are finding it impossible to succeed, and most of them know not why, because they have not applied for knowledge to the Bible, the only possible authority on the world-problem and its true solution.

Failure and public criticism of their failure is

the portion of the statesmen of to-day. Things are coming to such a pitch as that mentioned in Scripture, when instead of public office being desired it will rather be shunned, and one shall say to another: "Be *thou* our ruler, and let this ruin be under *thy* hand," and that other shall reply: "Make *me* not a ruler of the people."¹

If statesmen understood, as they would from the study of Biblical prophecy, what the supreme duty of a Government is at the present day, they would find relief from their distress of mind. That duty is, in the first place, to believe that the rightful Governor of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ, is coming back in fulfilment of His pledged word to take upon His own shoulder the burden of government. Their duty in the second place is to call upon the nation whose political chiefs they may be, to believe on and prepare to welcome the returning Lord.

Does that seem a hard thing to do? It must be a much harder thing for a statesman to persuade himself, and to say to the public, that he can lead the country through the present and the threatened dangers, and that he has a policy which can save the world.

Freedom and peace are surely the two great ideals of the Labour Party. But these can never be realised except in and through Jesus Christ. Freedom is a grand word, but the question is, freedom from what? From human oppression obviously, but also from the tyranny of sin, whether in the self or in the world, and freedom

¹ Isa. iii. 6, 7.

from the evil influences in the unseen. Only Jesus can, by His atoning death and by His resurrection life and power, break the bondage of sin and the tyranny of the evil spirit-beings over whom He triumphed in His death and rising again.

Together with all other ideals pursued by mere human effort, freedom eludes our grasp. We think we have it, and we find it is still to seek.

That is because these ideals are really the personal attributes of Christ Jesus. Attempt to strip them from Him and make them stand and march alone, and you fail. They must be looked for in relation to Him: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed!"¹

Peace, another of the attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ, will never come to earth until He comes and brings it with Him.

The "labour" people it was who "heard Him gladly" when He was here before. He had such compassion upon them, His love and pity won them, and because their misfortunes gave them a heart a little more like His own "meek and lowly" heart, they understood better than other people did, "the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief," who, though equal with God, had humbled Himself and taken upon Him the form of a servant, a toiler. Among the first Christians, "labour" people were the majority, "not many mighty, not many noble" being called. Is it to be so now? Will the "labour" people, the manual workers, be foremost in hearing and rejoicing in

¹ John viii. 36.

His message for to-day : “ I will come again, . . . surely I come quickly. . . . When ye see these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.”

It depends upon whether the workers have still the humbler, more responsive heart that they had at the first advent of Jesus. If they have the same heart as then, all promises well. On the other hand, it may be that the greater humility and willingness to receive the Lord Jesus and to depend upon Him, is to be found among those upon whom the changed conditions of the time have enforced anxieties and privations formerly unknown. It may be that the workers are at present buoyed up, not to say puffed up, by the illusion that the touch of their hand upon world-affairs will set all things right.

After all “there is no respect of persons with God.” He recognises no human distinctions of class. In point of righteousness, He tells mankind that they have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. To all alive He offers forgiveness and regeneration on the terms of faith in His Son.

God who “removeth kings and setteth up kings,” and removeth and setteth up Governments no less, has been giving British Labour a chance. Not a chance to reform the world, to introduce a new world-order : no human governors can do that, not even Labour governors ! It is a task reserved for the Lord Jesus—is within His power only.

No ! the chance that has been given to the

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British Labour Government is that of demonstrating to themselves and all observers throughout the world that, every class in turn having now tried their hand at government and without success, there is but one hope left of a better world-order, and that is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ as the King who shall reign in righteousness.

V I I

THE RELATION BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

THE final collapse of human statesmanship comes (if it come nowhere else) at the point where East meets West. Humanly insoluble is the problem of the relation between the Occident and the Orient.

We find here the most powerful of the reasons why the return of the Lord Jesus as King of kings is indispensable.

One shrinks from probing too far into all the issues and implications, preferring to take refuge in the knowledge that before long the King of kings will be here to establish a new order in which the perplexities and perils of the present order will not even be possible.

However, some review of this affair of East and West it is a duty to make, if only that we may be stirred to a new sense of the need of the Lord's return. The more dispassionate and impartial our review the better, for thus can we get the clearer and more helpful vision of the problem.

The Oriental peoples who have been under Western tutelage are now desirous of standing free and independent.

Given the complete emancipation of all Oriental peoples from every vestige of Western control,

will the sequel be—"that they all, of the East and of the West, lived happily together ever afterwards"? We are forbidden to think so—forbidden by the historical experience of human nature. The whole circumstances of the case make a happy ending impossible, if the end is left to human writing.

When human ambition, rivalry and lust for power produce such horrors as history has seen between peoples all of Western race, what better are we to expect when an emancipated Orient, quite equally human and therefore faulty, confronts the Occident? When I think on these things, I am constrained with the Psalmist to cry out, "Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down!"

Assuming that the specific complaints of those peoples who are in any sort of dependence upon the West were disposed of and all were entirely free from the yoke, that will not end the story. There would arise new and perhaps greater difficulties, for human nature produces its characteristic effects in all circumstances.

A serious question to be faced in such a day will be the economic relations between East and West, upon which so much depends for our industrial population. Much could be said upon that theme and much will be thought by the readers of these pages.

War! We cannot exclude the possibility of future war even as between Western peoples, nor can we do so as between East and West. Much, again, could be written here on the risk of war in its connection with the subject of this chapter.

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Oh, for the speedy coming of the One who can make wars to cease !

Another idea suggests itself—that of a diplomacy gathering the fruits of war under the simple threat of war. A small and but recently defeated Asiatic people gave a startling exhibition of such diplomacy not long ago.

Too well do we know the ambition, rancour, rivalry and lust for power that human nature imports into international relations, even where the Western world alone is concerned, and will surely do so, no less, where the Western and Eastern worlds both are concerned.

What can permanently avert the clash of East and West, except the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to regulate all these international relations in accordance with the divine plan ?

But acute crisis may be staved off for a time, and the very prospect of this crisis will perhaps do much to bring about the arrangement discussed in Chapter XI under the heading, “The Roman Empire Revives.” This policy, raising Western prestige to its highest power by invoking the name and traditions and methods of ancient Rome, may well be prompted by the hope of impressing the peoples of the East, and confronting them with a solid confederation of Western peoples.

The revival of Rome may even be accomplished with the co-operation of an Eastern leader able to speak with some degree of authority for all, or a sufficient number of, the Eastern peoples. Such a leader may be expected to arise, it seems, in the nearer rather than in the farther East.

He might count it advantageous to strike a bargain, using his Eastern leadership as bargaining power, which should give him the part he desires in the revived grandeur of Rome. Events will soon speak as to this.

In considering the wave of Oriental humanity, the most serious point has yet to be raised—this Oriental wave would be non-Christian and would hasten and accentuate that apostasy which already exists in the Christian countries of the West.

After all, this is the test to which the issue of East and West must be brought: How is it related to that major issue of the predominance of the Lord Jesus?

The wise men of the East followed the star that led them to Palestine and finally stood over the cradle of the infant Jesus. They were wiser in their generation than the whole of the Eastern world of to-day. They knew Jesus to be their Lord and their God.

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” said these travellers from the East to Herod, “for we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him.”

To worship Him! The wise men knew, for they had studied the Old Testament, that the prophesied King of the Jews was to be the Light also of the Gentiles.

The one-time power and fame of the Jewish people, especially under King Solomon, as well as the works of God in their behalf at other times, their strange vicissitudes, their whole miraculous history, had given to the Hebrew Scriptures a

resonance and an importance in the East which forbade ignorance of the prophesied manifestation of God in the flesh. These wise men travelling in search of the Lord Jesus are the witness to the fore-knowledge of Him that existed in the East throughout the centuries preceding His birth. Because of this Eastern knowledge of the Old Testament, the wise men were able to make explicit, scriptural reference to the Lord Jesus as "King of the Jews," and as newly-born too, thus identifying Him as the One announced by the prophet Isaiah, as follows: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

There was His Deity foretold. As He Himself said in the days of His preaching: "I proceeded and came forth from God. . . . I and the Father are One. . . . He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Therefore the wise men, instructed by the Oracles of God, were bent upon worshipping the Infant Jesus as God. Hence their joy when they saw the star as it "stood over where the young Child was."

Isaiah's prophecy had foretold the Child as Almighty God. The prophecy had also promised Him as Heir to the throne of David—"of the increase of His government there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth, even for ever." ¹

¹ Isa. ix. 7.

That is why they inquired definitely and specifically for the "King of the Jews," because it was He, and He only, the Heir to the throne of David, of whom they had come in search. They did homage to Him as King; they worshipped Him as God.

Their splendid faith, which has so honourable mention in Scripture, is a challenge, a message of appeal to the men of the East of this day, to take their stand for the Lord Jesus, the true King of the whole world, the Saviour, or the Judge (as they may choose) of all men and women—the God of the Universe, He in whom is embodied all the fulness of the Godhead.

Really, the one thing that counts in this universal crisis is whether an individual or a nation is for or against the Lord Jesus and His supremacy.

The world is in a hopeless mess even without the added complication of the meeting of East and West. With or without that complication, nothing can make an end of this bad and worsening condition save the return to reign of the Lord Jesus. He Himself, when He comes, will deal with every issue.

When the government of the world is upon His shoulder, the difficulties upon which human statesmanship is wrecked will simply not arise.

There will be no race-problem under the reign of the Lord Jesus. He, the visible manifestation of the Godhead, "the Most High who divided to the Nations their inheritance"¹ will cause all the peoples of the earth, of the East and of the West, to live at peace. Is He not "Prince of Peace"?

¹ Deut. xxxii. 8.

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Only the divine wisdom which is His can know how this racial relationship ought to be adjusted. No human mind, whether in the East or in the West, knows this. It is the want of understanding, as well as the want of goodwill, that makes it impossible for humanity to solve this problem. There is an ideal solution, of course, but the world will never learn what that is until the Lord Jesus returns as King of kings to announce the perfect policy, and by His divine, regal power to carry it into effect.

Under His rule "all men shall be blessed in Him and all nations shall call Him blessed." The peoples of the East no less than of the West will know Him: "I will make mention of Egypt and Babylon as among them that know Me."¹

"Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."²

¹ Ps. lxxxvii. 4.

² Ps. lxxii. 11.

VIII

NATURE IN CONVULSION

EVEN Nature shares the unrest of the times: "Great earthquakes in divers places," "the sea and the waves roaring,"¹ are among the specific signs of the end of this Age. Always there have been storms and earthquakes, it is true. Nature has never been at peace just as the nations have never been at peace. But now as the end approaches, the wars—and everybody is saying so—grow more deadly. Similarly, the convulsions of nature are on the increase, though not nearly at the full. These are but preliminary and premonitory symptoms of far more serious convulsions yet to be.

What gives the more meaning to the present unrest of nature is its coincidence with the many other signs of the Age's end.

Simple folk feel the need of a supernatural explanation of the violences of nature. They are in the right, and all the worldly-wise some day will be of the same way of thinking.

Pause now, when earth, sea and sky are bearing their part in the discord of this closing Age and look back upon past crises, as recorded in the Bible. They tell us the same truth—the con-

¹ Luke xxi. 11, 25.

nection, as of cause and effect, between human sin and the disturbance of the natural creation. Some people, even in these days of rapidly fulfilling prophecy, still prefer to rely on authorities other than the Bible. Now here is a Book which has been proved to be able to tell history before as well as after the recorded events have happened, and there are people left, even as the Twentieth Century is a quarter on its way, who ignore the testimony of such a Book. This is surely reactionary. That the natural creation responds to the presence, to the touch of its Creator is taught in the Bible. The final stage of the rebellion against the Lord Jesus is necessarily marked by violent disturbance, the raging of the winds, the trembling and cracking of the earth. When the rebellion is quelled, then the heavens and the earth, that have been the scene of this conflict, will know peace.

Until then, these strange and terrible things will continue and increase. The heavens will contribute their message of horror that the Lord Jesus should be rejected anywhere in His own Creation. "All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made."¹

So humanity has been forewarned: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

¹ John i. 3.

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And after that: "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."¹

That will be the end of the great rebellion. When the Lord of Creation reigns unchallenged, all Nature will be at rest.

"As in the days of Noah," the Lord Himself sends us back to the Flood for an illustration of cause and effect as they would work when the time should come for His return. "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

What were these pre-Flood days like? As God saw them, they were evil days. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was wicked continually. . . . The earth was corrupt before God and full of violence."

From the human standpoint, on the contrary, the human heart and the world-condition were then quite good and promised to be better. Noah was in but a small minority when he believed in and prepared against a catastrophe which would overwhelm the existing order.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was also cited by the Lord Jesus, as exemplifying the calamity which eventually visits a God-defying world-system.

Human disease, the failure of the soil's fertility, the raging of the elements, the splitting of the earth's surface, outbreaks in the firmament—what

¹ Luke xxi. 25-27.

else can be expected if the relation with the Creator is maladjusted !

The plagues of Egypt give another instance of physical phenomena as the expression and consequence of conflict between God and man.

When the crime of all crimes was committed and men crucified God—what happened ? For three hours “there was a darkness over all the earth.”¹ . . . “Jesus when He had cried again with a loud voice yielded up the ghost, and behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom and the earth did quake and the rocks rent.”²

Well might the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, when they “saw the earthquake and those things that were done” fear greatly and say, “Truly this *was* the Son of God.”³

Those Romans in speaking thus were more honest (or was it more intelligent ?) than the others of whom Gibbon writes in his *Decline and Fall of Rome*. Referring to the phenomena which attended the Crucifixion, he says :

“But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan philosophic world to those evidences which were represented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses ? During the age of Christ and of His apostles and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they forwarded was confirmed by innumerable evidences. The lame walked and the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were ex-

¹ Luke xxiii. 44.

² Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.

³ *Ibid.* xxvii. 54.

pelled and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and study. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects and received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers in a laborious work has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.

"A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration, but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age."

That significant silence of Pliny ! If only the Lord Jesus had not been concerned, but some

other, perhaps the pagan philosophic world would have been moved from their inattention. There are philosophers at the present day who are equally inattentive to the miracle of the fulfilment of prophecy now going on before their very eyes.

The highest and most urgent employment of the human mind, at this time, is to search the Scriptures for the meaning of current events, and for knowledge of the future immediately before us. Will not our philosophers renounce human speculation, in favour of the study of prophecy as it applies to the dangers and perplexities of to-day and to-morrow?

Earthquakes in divers places! This sign is emphatic. Needless to give the complete catalogue of recent earthquakes. That in Japan was among the chief catastrophes on record. It is a region where earthquakes are not unusual, you say. None the less terrible to those living there! Moreover, does anyone imagine that upheavals can continue to occur in such regions without at last having an effect, an awful effect, in distant parts of the world—where you or I happen, perhaps, to live!

The earth's crust is continuous, and therefore grave, repeated damage sustained in one part thereof, will eventually lead to injury elsewhere. Already we find shocks in the Western Pacific attributed to "readjustments" consequent upon the Japanese disaster in a distant part of the same ocean!

Earthquakes have also been occurring in less usual quarters. Not long ago one of the great

ocean liners narrowly escaped disaster owing to a series of submarine earthquakes which occurred as the vessel was passing near Long Island on her way to New York. It is said, too, that beneath the South Atlantic, as the result of recent upheavals, there are mountains thousands of feet high where before there were valleys.

Earthquakes in Italy, in the Balkans, earthquakes in Asia Minor, earthquakes even in England !

Most of these earthquakes have done little harm. Let us be deeply thankful for that, and look upon them as forewarnings, designed to call mankind to attention before a day of reckoning to come. The long-suffering of God is witnessed by the nineteen long centuries since the Cross. During that time God's message to man has been, *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world !*

God having provided for Himself a Lamb and having so loved the world as to give up that Lamb to the slaughter, the divinely appointed means exists whereby humanity may be exonerated from its guilt and the penalty of guilt.

In the prayer to be used in storms at sea, there is the cry : " Save, Lord, or else we perish. We confess when we have been safe and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgot Thee, our God, and refused to hearken to the still Voice of Thy word and to obey Thy commandments. But now we see how terrible Thou art in all Thy works of wonder : the great God to be feared above all and therefore we adore Thy Divine Majesty, acknowledging Thy power and imploring Thy

goodness. Help, Lord, and save us for Thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord." In the storms and shakings of the earth, already beginning, many hearts must be raising such a cry as this.

But a large part of humanity, even in the shadow of the coming storm, rejects the benefit of the divine sacrifice—will not hear of accepting it, prefers to go its own way.

The patient pleading and waiting of the Spirit of God is to be marvelled at. Even now, warning is added to warning. Sign is added to sign. The satisfaction of the great longing of God—the glorious manifestation of His Son—is delayed.

But now the final chapter of this Age's history is opening, and nature in convulsion will be one of the terrible features of that time, inseparable as we have seen from the conflict that will rage respecting the position and authority of the true Lord of all the earth. "Lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became as blood." ¹ "And there was a great earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great—and the cities of the nations fell!" ²

Fearful prospect—yet all would be averted were the conditions of peace fulfilled by the voluntary allegiance of intelligent Creation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Does not the Apostle remind us that the whole of the lower creation groans for release from the

¹ Rev. vi. 12.

² *Ibid.* xvi. 18, 19.

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disorder into which it has been thrown in consequence of the rebellion against God on the part of the higher creation ?¹

In this controversy which God has with the nations, this prophetic word of the Psalmist will be true : “ Then the earth shook and trembled ; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth.” ²

Prophecy surpasses itself in literal clearness in this promise concerning the Lord Jesus, that “ His feet shall stand at that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem—and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof, toward the East and toward the West.” ³ Again, the Psalmist paints the picture for us : “ The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.”

Now for the final note of joy, Nature swelling the chorus : “ Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth ; the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved ; He shall rule the peoples righteously. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad ; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful and all that is therein ; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for He cometh, He cometh to judge the earth ; He shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with His truth.” ⁴

¹ Rom. viii. 19-22.

² Ps. xviii. 7.

³ Zech. xiv. 4.

⁴ Ps. xcvi. 10-13.

I X

ZIONISM

THE Jew in Palestine ! It is the most joyful thing that has happened since the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, because it is the decisive sign of His return. Other signs are present, but the Jew in Palestine countersigns them all.

Of these other signs, some people may say : “ Oh ! there have been wars and rumours of wars before ” ; or : “ There have been earthquakes before ” ; and so on and so forth. But never, since the Lord Jesus revealed the signs of the Age-end and His return, have these things happened, as now, *in conjunction with a return of the Jew to Palestine and the restoration there of the Jewish national home.*

How this Jewish sign has strengthened since then ! The number of Jews re-settled in Palestine steadily grows. True, there are millions of Jews still scattered among the nations, according to the ancient warning and its long-ago performance. But to fulfil the conditions of prophecy associated with the Lord’s Second Coming, it needs not that they shall all be back in the land before Christ returns, not even that a majority shall be there. It is enough that there be a representation of the people there and something of a national home

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established, so that the scene may be set for the appearing of Messiah.

Long ago there was another return of the Jews to Palestine. So important was this in the reckoning of God that He foretold it through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, before ever the captivity from which the Jews were to return took place. More than that, the name of the Gentile monarch who was to permit and facilitate this return to Palestine was prophetically declared.

Consider first the prophecy :

“I am the Lord, that maketh all things; . . . that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure : even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”¹

Thus was Cyrus, neither born nor thought of until long, long afterward, actually foretold by name. His career of conquest and monarchy were also foretold as being decreed by God, in order that this Cyrus might be empowered to serve as the instrument for the restoration of the Jews to their land, and so we read :

“Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings. . . . I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight : I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron : . . . that *thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name*, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake and Israel Mine elect, I

¹ Isa. xliv. 24, 28.

have even called thee by thy name ; I have sur-named thee, though thou hast not known Me.”¹

When Cyrus, generations afterward, read this divine prophecy, he recognised himself therein. Accordingly, in the first year of his reign, he made proclamation through all his kingdom, as follows :

“ Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people ? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.”²

Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, writes that “ when Cyrus had said this to the Israelites, the rulers of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites and priests, went in haste to Jerusalem ; *yet did many of them stay at Babylon, as not willing to leave their possessions.*”

The taunt is heard in our own days that the Jews, like those of the time of Cyrus, are not willing to leave their possessions in the Gentile lands in which they find themselves dispersed. However true this may be of many, there are quite enough Jews for God’s purpose already in Palestine or earnestly desiring to be there.

In the time of Cyrus, the whole congregation of those who went to their own land was but “ forty and two thousand three hundred and three score.”³

But that sufficed. The Jewish national home

¹ Isa. xlv. 1-4.

² Ezra i. 2, 3.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 64.

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was reconstituted, and a representation of the Jewish people was back in the Promised Land. This condition existed also at the Incarnation of Messiah as the promised Child and at His sacrifice as the true Passover Lamb.

For, at the birth, the death and the resurrection of Messiah, there had to be, in Palestine, Jews and the Jewish national home. Now that Messiah is about to return, the God who "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia," has again raised up friends to help the return of the Jews and promote the restoration of their national home.

The Jew in Palestine is a condition precedent to the return of the Messiah.

Not only are the Jews to be there to witness His appearing, but the very occasion of His return will be their danger at the hands of enemies who will be attacking them in Jerusalem. He will, in their extremity, come out of Zion as their deliverer.

Not all Jews, it seems, realise at present that the outcome of this homeward move of the race will have as its sequel the coming of Messiah. There are Jews who are as sceptical regarding the Old Testament prophecy as are some people in the Christian churches concerning the Bible as a whole. Some Jews disclaim all belief in miracle and prophecy. On the other hand, many Zionists regard events in Palestine as being in literal fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy from Moses to Malachi. They are inspired to effort in the Zionist cause by a clear expectation of Messiah's coming. And all Jews, with to-day very few

exceptions, and whether or no they "know that Messiah cometh,"¹ have come to believe in the re-establishment of the national home in Palestine. What a change is this! Until 1917 some of the strongest foes of this policy were to be found among Jews. Doubtless they thought it a hopeless one, and indeed without the eye of faith in the God of the Bible it was difficult to believe it other than hopeless.

But since, in 1917, the way for the return to Zion was opened up, an extraordinary change has come about. The most privileged and powerful, the wealthiest, the most worldly-wise Jews are now one with the most visionary, prophetically-minded of the Zionists in desiring Palestine as the national home of their people. Disclaiming, as many of them do, the Zionist name and affiliation, they nevertheless are more and more using their influence, ability, energy, wealth for the economic progress of Palestine and the upbuilding there of the national cause. We find leading Jews, having no part in the Zionist movement, paying visits to Palestine and on their return reporting themselves enchanted with what they have seen, and thenceforth throwing themselves into the work of subscribing and raising money for Palestinian development and promoting all manner of developments—economic, educational and so forth—in the land. We hear of a plan for encouraging and financing Jewish migration on a far greater scale than heretofore. The project of harnessing the river Jordan to supply Palestine

¹ John iv. 25.

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with light, heat and power has been taken up by a group of prominent Jews. One leading Jew, after a visit of inquiry to Palestine, has returned to New York deploring the want of suitable Jewish places of worship, and this, as he says, in the land where once stood Solomon's Temple! Just a foreshadowing this of the building of the new Jewish temple which students of prophecy know is to be expected.

Perhaps the outstanding Jews, whose position in finance, commerce, the Press, politics, science, education and other fields is so important throughout the world, may have no present intention of ever themselves settling in Palestine. But that no longer prevents them from desiring Palestine as a home for their race. Their reasons for now working toward that end are various.

To begin with, the prestige of Jews in whatever countries they may be living will be, they believe, vastly increased by the existence of a national centre in Palestine. Further, in Palestine, a distinctively Jewish culture can be developed, and this appeals to the imagination of this people everywhere.

More impelling reason still, they believe in the possibility of a tidal wave of anti-Semitism in many countries, and regard Palestine as a refuge to which Jews, threatened by persecution or even massacre, can betake themselves, in order to live and work in peace and safety.

Yet the time of Jacob's trouble is at hand, when the Jews will not be safe even in Palestine.

Let no one speak hardly of the Jew, nor lightly

of his sufferings. Remember that God has taken it in hand to chasten the Jews and that His wrath is declared against those who, when He is wroth with them but a little, help forward the affliction ! Remember that they are “ beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” Remember that to them “ were committed the oracles of God ”—the hands that, at the inspiration of the Spirit, wrote the Old and the New Testaments being the hands of Jews. Remember that whatever the Gentile may think of the Jew, “ God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew ”—but “ through their fall,” their rejection of Messiah when He offered Himself in humiliation, “ salvation is come to the Gentiles.”¹ The blindness of the Jew at the first advent of the Lord Jesus to the fact that He was their promised Saviour from sin and their divine King—this blindness kept the door open for the Gentiles that they might enter in by faith.

The first advent of Messiah was the Jews’ opportunity to end their national afflictions by coming under Messiah’s sheltering wing and being reconciled with Him as their Lord and God. But blindness befalling them, to the Gentiles were “ the unsearchable riches of Christ ” made available through faith in Him. So that the blinding, the fall and the casting away of the Jews in the day of the Cross, was to the incalculable advantage of the Gentile peoples.

When the “ Deliverer appears out of Zion,” the Jews, beset by attacking forces, in their desperation will have been crying upon Messiah to come,

¹ Rom. xi. 11.

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remembering and understanding at last the words of Jesus when He said, "Ye shall not see Me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Then, when He appears in answer to this call, as His Spirit has declared through the prophet: "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced."¹

Delivered through His mighty power from the presence and peril of their enemies, they shall mourn because of Him, because of their past rejection of Him, because of the sacrificial wounds He bears.

Then shall there be opened for them the "fountain for sin and for uncleanness,"² which is none other than "the blood of Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin."³

Meanwhile, the beginning of all these things is seen in the return of the Jews to Palestine. Miraculously their hearts have been stirred to this enterprise, barriers have been cleared out of the way, and Gentiles have had their spirit stirred up that the word of the Lord by the prophets may be fulfilled.⁴

"So likewise, when ye see these things come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is at hand."⁵

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

² *Ibid.* xiii. 1.

³ 1 John i. 7.

⁴ Ezra i. 1.

⁵ Luke xxi. 31.

X

THE UNREST IN EUROPE

UNREST in Europe! When has there been anything else? The malady is chronic and inevitably so, because here is the strategic centre of the world-war for and against the overlordship of Jesus.

Human plans for the pacification and healing of Europe take no account of the real *casus belli*. They ignore the malignant disease by which Europe is being devoured. They provide no way of coping with human nature's revolt against our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. They are based, rather, upon the assumption that human nature is the potential *cure* instead of being, as it is, the actual *cause* of the evil. As for satanic activity, the authors of these plans deign not so much as to admit its possibility. Therefore they do not attempt, even if they were able, to find a means of overcoming it.

All this explains why European unrest has endured through the centuries and now is more formidable than ever. The cause of it is beyond removal by these human policies. Only by revelation could we even have known what the cause is. The Bible is certainly the only trusty guide to world affairs.

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For an understanding of the European situation, present and future, we must turn especially to the prophet Daniel. What a light that inspired writer throws upon the history of this Age! Historians and professors of history are blind leaders of the blind if they attempt to dispense with the prophecy of Daniel. Statesmen have no right to that name, who do not avail themselves of the information given by that prophecy. There can be no philosophy of history nor any political science at variance with that revealed through Daniel.

The Book of Daniel shows how God, who "changeth times and seasons and removeth kings and setteth up kings," ¹ brought in the Times of the Gentiles, during which the Gentile peoples should be in control of world affairs. The entire history of the Times of the Gentiles is foretold. This long historic period began with the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah, ruled by the royal house of David. It continues to this day and will end with the downfall of Gentile power and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose rule is to take the place of every other. This period, the Times of the Gentiles, is now drawing to its close.

Its history is told us, in the first place, through the vision of the great Image. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of this Image, but on waking he could not bring it to mind, although the dream had shaken his very being, as well it might. For to this monarch, in whose reign the Times of the Gentiles began, had been revealed, in symbol, the

¹ Dan. ii. 21.

whole future of the world until the Gentile power shall cease, and the kingdoms of the world shall become "the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ."

To Daniel, the young captive Jew, was given, in answer to prayer, the vision of the Image, and also the knowledge of its meaning. For as Daniel assured Nebuchadnezzar, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets and maketh known . . . what shall be in the latter days." Then did Daniel bring the vision to the king's mind, "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image . . . whose brightness was excellent . . . and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." ¹

The Image represented the four great Empires which were successively to dominate the world during the Times of the Gentiles. The first Empire, the head of gold, was Babylon, for Daniel plainly told Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou art this head of gold." ² The other three were then still future, yet, marvellously, two of them were definitely named in the prophecy in connection with a later vision Daniel had in which he saw these two Empires symbolised as a ram and a goat respectively, it being revealed to him that: "The ram which thou sawest that had the two horns they are the kings of Media and Persia; and the rough goat is the king of Grecia." ³ So we have identified the second and third Empires of the

¹ Dan. ii. 31-33.

² *Ibid.* ii. 38.

³ *Ibid.* viii. 20, 21.

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Image as Media-Persia and Greece, a fact confirmed by history. As for the iron part of the Image, the fourth and last Gentile Empire, that is unmistakably Rome.

And the Roman Empire, as we shall see in later chapters, has not only remained in being through all the centuries until now, but is waking to new life and is about to resume the vigour and prestige of the past.

The whole Image is in fact being re-erected at this time—re-erected in readiness for the mighty crash to come at the end of the Times of the Gentiles.

For Nebuchadnezzar saw the destruction of the great Image, and as Daniel said to him: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the Image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the Image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." ¹

So this Gentile period in which we are living is to have an end, and a sudden end. The present world-order is to collapse at a blow, leaving nothing behind but unremembered dust. The Stone that strikes this blow? Of course it is the Lord Jesus. "The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner." ²

"The stone cut without hands" is He who

Dan. ii. 34, 35.

² Ps. cxviii. 22.

said : " My kingdom is not of this world "—that is to say, not conferred on Him by human choice or appointment, but conferred upon Him by God the Father.

Daniel saw all that in vision. He tells us : " I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days. . . . And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all nations and peoples and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." ¹

The crisis is near. That is what the strange condition of Europe means. Through all the chaos and perplexity, the great Image of Daniel's prophecy is being re-formed and re-erected before our very eyes. The Asiatic domains that form part of the Image are coming to life again. The composite map of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome is one with the map of the world's present centre of main importance. The stage on which those Empires played their part is the same stage on which the last act, the last scene of the Age, is to be enacted. It is the strangest re-entry of the ancient characters clothed in modern dress.

Yes ! Daniel gives us the clue to the labyrinth of modern international politics. That tortuous path leads on to where that great Image stands, reared up and refurbished, shining indeed with " an excellent brightness " which shall deceive

¹ Dan. vii. 13, 14.

the unwary—yet reserved by divine Providence for destruction, to make way for the perfect reign of the Son of God.

In the last ten years, things incredible in advance have happened to refashion the Image. The late war had much to do with this. The war, in fact, is explainable only by reference to the Image. In redrawing, as it did, the map of Europe and Asia, it traced thereon most of the lines of the original Image territory and, most important of all, those of the Roman Empire. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, which lay across and obliterated the outlines of the Image territories, has disappeared. The German Empire, too, has gone, another advance toward the separation of Roman from non-Roman territory. The re-establishment of Roman boundaries, which (so far as we can interpret prophecy before its actual fulfilment) is prophetically necessary and has largely taken place, gives the inner meaning of French insistence upon the return of Alsace-Lorraine and their craving for the Rhine frontier.

Human beings are, willy-nilly, fulfilling prophecy. They may be scornful or be ignorant of it, but they cannot help fulfilling it by fitting into the prophetic picture. They do what God, whose vision is not limited by time or space, has seen and prophetically described them as doing. It will be found that all the issues now dividing and perturbing Europe are related, more or less closely, to the primary business of the re-erecting of the Image.

The overthrow of the old Turkish Empire,

another result of the war, has had a big share in making ready the Image for the final developments of the Age. The Asiatic portion of the Image is becoming curiously reminiscent of what it was in the Image's younger days! It seems that, prior to its final destruction, all those four Empires that succeeded each other in historical procession are, as far as may be, to have some sort of concurrent life. Yet the Image of course will be, though not exclusively, yet distinctively Roman. Because it is upon the Roman part, upon the feet of iron and clay, that the death-blow of the Image will be received.

Those ten-toed feet of iron and clay represent two characteristics of Rome at the close of the Age. There is shown the nations into which the Roman earth is divided, confederated as those nations are to be, to form the Empire in its last phase. The iron in association with clay shows the dictatorial authority which, as will be seen, is to be established in order to overcome the contrary tendency to disorganisation and repudiation of authority of every kind.

The revival of Rome, which is now in progress, and the career of the latter-day Cæsar, whose identity may at any moment become clear, will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The study of these matters is indispensable to an understanding of what is to happen before Europe can find rest.

PART II

THE FINAL YEARS OF THIS AGE

XI

THE ROMAN EMPIRE REVIVES

I. THE ROME THAT ENDURED

THE prophet Daniel said that the Roman Empire will be in existence at the end of this Age. History bears him out in this, for Rome has lived from its beginning until now. When there has been suspended animation, resuscitation has followed.

The grand—and the last—renovation of the Roman Empire is yet to come. It is even now in preparation, as we shall see in the next chapter. But as a reminder of how the Empire has been kept alive, we may glance at its continuity in history. Lord Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire* will serve our purpose here. It is true that the first words of this book declare that Rome, having survived until so modern a date as August 1806, then died. But in a supplementary chapter, Lord Bryce recognised that Rome was still in being. Here are the two statements :

Apparent Death.

"Of those who, in August 1806, read in the English newspaper that the Emperor Franz Joseph had announced to the Diet his resignation of the Imperial crown, there

Resuscitation.

"In 1806, the Holy Empire died and was buried and to all appearance soon forgotten. No outworn shape of the past could have seemed less likely to be ever recalled to life,

Apparent Death.

were probably few who reflected that the oldest political institution in the world had come to an end. Yet it was so. The Empire, which a note issued by a diplomatist on the banks of the Danube extinguished, was the same which the crafty nephew of Julius had won for himself against the powers of the East, beneath the cliffs of Actium; and which had preserved, almost unaltered, through eighteen centuries of time and through the greatest of changes in extent, in power, in character, a title and pretensions from which all meaning had long since departed. Nothing else so directly linked the old world with the new—nothing else displayed so many strange contrasts of the present and the past, and summed up in those contrasts so much of European history. To trace with any minuteness the career of the Empire would be to write the history of Christendom from the fifth century to the twelfth, of Germany and Italy from the twelfth to the nineteenth."

Resuscitation.

for the forces which had so long assailed and at last destroyed it were stronger than ever and threatened with extinction even that feeble shadow, which, under the name of the Germanic Confederation, affected in some sort to represent the unity of the German nation. Fifty years passed away, new questions arose and Europe ranged itself into new parties; men's minds began to be swayed by new feelings; time drove fast onward and the Holy Roman Empire seemed left so far behind among the mists of the past, that it was hard to believe that living men had seen it and borne part in its government. Then suddenly there arose from these ashes a new vigorous self-confident German Empire, a state which, although most different as well in its inner character as in its form and legal aspect, is nevertheless in a very real sense that predecessor's representative. . . . For not only does the new Empire hold that central and commanding place among Continental States which the old Empire once filled: it is in a moral and intellectual sense the offspring of the older Empire, and but for the pre-existence of the other would never have itself come into being."

The Imperial heritage of the Cæsars was Napoleon's ambition, and if he desired to dispossess Austria thereof it was that he might possess it himself. His Austrian marriage was viewed as securing for his descendants the hereditary title to the Imperial throne. His coronation by the Pope was reminiscent of the papal coronation of the Emperor Charlemagne.

Why! the ambition of supermen has been enough to prevent the real extinction of Rome. They have preferred to rule, rather than to destroy the Empire.

Lord Bryce in his chapter, "The Barbarian Invasions," has emphasised this thought. Says he: "The Mongol Attila excepted, there is among these terrible hosts no destroyer; the wish of each leader is to maintain the existing order, to spare life, to respect every work of skill and labour, above all, to perpetuate the methods of Roman administration, and rule the people as the deputy or successor of their Emperor." Then follows this quotation from Athaulf the Visigoth, the brother and successor of Alaric: "It was at first my wish to destroy the Roman name and erect in its place a Gothic Empire, taking to myself the place and the powers of Cæsar Augustus. But . . . I chose the glory of renewing and maintaining by Gothic strength the fame of Rome, desiring to go down to posterity as the restorer of that Roman power which it was beyond my power to replace."

"It is hardly too much to say," comments our author, "that the thought of antagonism to the Empire and the wish to extinguish it never crossed

the mind of the barbarians. The conception of that Empire was too universal, too august, too enduring."

Coming to the rehabilitation of the Western Empire by the Franks, he says :

"There appeared in the farthest corner of Europe . . . one whose power, good fortune and heroic character pointed him out as worthy of a dignity to which doctrine and tradition had attached a sanctity almost divine.

"The Pope . . . turned his gaze beyond the Alps to a Catholic chief who had just achieved a signal deliverance for Christendom on the field of Poitiers. . . .—Some accounts add that Charles was offered in the name of the Roman people the office of consul and patrician.—Charles died before he could answer the call, but his son, Pipin, made good use of the new friendship with Rome. . . . In the autumn of 799 Charles (Pipin's son) descended from the Alps once more while Pope Leo revolved deeply the great scheme for whose accomplishment the time was now ripe.

"Three hundred and twenty-four years had passed since the last Cæsar of the West resigned his power into the hands of the Senate and left to his Eastern brother the headship of the Roman world. . . . The idea of a Roman Empire as a necessary part of the world's order had not vanished. . . . The Christian commonwealth needed more than ever an efficient head and centre. . . . Such leadership it could nowise find in the Court of the Bosphorus. . . . By what right, it might well be asked, did the factions of Byzantium impose a master on the original seal of Empire? It was time to provide better for the most august of human offices ; and election at

Rome was as valid as at Constantinople—the possessor of the real power should also be clothed with the outward dignity. Nor could it be doubted where that possessor was to be found.”

Charlemagne was the man, and so, when on Christmas Day A.D. 800, he attended St. Peters, this happened :

“The Pope now rose as the reading of the Gospel ended, advanced to where Charles—who had exchanged his simple Frankish dress for the sandals and chlamys of a Roman patrician—knelt in prayer by the high altar, and as in the sight of all he placed upon the brow of the barbarian Chieftain the diadem of the Cæsars, then bent in obeisance before him, the church rang to the shout of the multitude, again free, again the lords and centre of the world, ‘*Karolo, a Deo coronato magno et pacifico imperator vita et victoria.*’ ”

Commenting upon the coronation of Charlemagne as Roman Emperor as the “central event of the Middle Ages” and upon its decisive effect upon the subsequent history of the world, Lord Bryce speaks of the two forces throughout the Dark or Middle Ages striving for mastery, and uses words which some people would apply to the conditions of this present day. “The one force was the instinct of separation, disorder, anarchy, caused by the ungoverned impulses and barbarous ignorance of the great bulk of mankind ; the other was that passionate longing of the better minds for a formal unity of government which had its historical basis in the memories of the old Roman Empire.”

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This Empire now was Charlemagne's. As Lord Bryce says: "His was nothing less than the headship of the world." He was guided by the traditions of the old Empire, and "his sway is the revival of order and culture, fusing the West into a compact whole whose parts are never thenceforward to lose the marks of their connection and their half-Roman character."

Upon "the extinction of the Carlovingian Empire of the West," when the reign of Charlemagne's grandson ended, came "the nadir of order and civilisation," and "the isolation, the antagonism, the increasing localisation of all powers."

But out of that condition emerges in due course "the Holy Roman Empire, taking the name in the sense which it commonly bore in later centuries as denoting the Sovereignty of Germany and Italy vested in a Germanic prince, which is the creation of Otto the Great. Substantially, it is true, as well as technically, it was a prolongation of the Empire of Charles, and it rested upon ideas essentially the same as those which brought about the coronation of 800 A.D."

Imperator Augustus was the title assumed by Otto and his first successors. Otto III. designed, "now that the solemn millennial era of the founding of Christianity had arrived, to renew the majesty of the city and make her again the capital of a world-embracing Empire, victorious as Trojan's, despotic as Justinian's, holy as Constantine's." His seals bear a legend resembling that used by Charles: *Renovatio Imperii Romanorum*.

Does not this remind one of some aspirations of the present time ?

Passing on and remembering by the way Henry III., under whom "the Empire attained the meridian of its power," we come to Frederick Barbarossa, whose reign was "the most brilliant in the annals of the Empire." Thereafter the Roman Empire declined in importance—but it survived. The fire died down, until under the ashes it seemed extinct, but nevertheless was always, as at this very moment, able to be fanned into a blaze.

Passing on, we come to A.D. 1273, when Rudolf, Count of Hapsburg, founder of the House of Austria, became Roman Emperor. "The Peace of Westphalia is an era in Imperial history not less clearly marked than the coronation of Otto the Great or the death of Frederick II. . . . Henceforth it is in everything but title purely and solely a German Empire. . . . We may wonder that the farce of an Empire should have been retained at all. . . ." Daniel, by implication, shows the real reason why the Empire, even as a German-Roman Empire, was retained—that it might be still in existence until the close of this Age.

"The Teutonic people," says Lord Bryce, "could not bring itself to abandon the venerable heritage of Rome."

Napoleon aimed, successfully for a brief space, to grasp and carry forward the torch, and to put an end to the anomaly of a Teutonic Roman Empire.

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“I succeeded to Charlemagne,” said he to Bourrienne. “I am Emperor of Rome,” he wrote to the Pope. Napoleon’s conquests, his Austrian marriage, his coronation by the Pope, his verbal claims, all mark him as the Roman Emperor of that time. The last contrary circumstance disappeared when the Austrian Emperor formally resigned the Roman Imperial dignity on the ground that in the changed conditions of the time he was unable to fulfil its obligations.

The fall of Napoleon did not extinguish the Roman Empire which had endured the historical chances of so many centuries. That it lived on is shown by what has happened since. The Austrian surrender of the Imperial title, made under duress of circumstances, in 1806, was after all not real and final until the Austrian Empire perished in the recent war.

For Germany it has been claimed, by Lord Bryce and others, that she succeeded to the Roman Empire in 1871. Certainly the Kaiser Wilhelm’s object in the war of 1914–18 was to gain a world-dominion, the equivalent of that of the Roman Cæsars. He sought to make himself all, and more than all, that they were. He failed—and the way is now open for the Roman Imperial sceptre to pass to another hand—for the Roman Empire to be revived and reconstructed.

The history of Rome has now come full circle. The Empire is again at the starting-point; and it is at the Latin, the Mediterranean point of its origin.

XII

ROME IN PRESENT-DAY POLITICS

THE Roman Empire stirred vigorously in its half-sleep at the outbreak of war.

“We of the Roman world, We heirs and perpetuators of the Latin civilisation and culture, are fighting this war in defence of our Roman inheritance.” Such sayings were frequently heard among the Allies during the war. The Alliance was substantially and in the main a Roman Alliance. We British were less conscious of this than were its Continental members, but then our country was less closely bound up with Rome in old time. Nevertheless a connection there was, and it is to be noticed that not only were we allied with France and the other Roman nations engaged in the Great War, but we have, ever since the war, in spite of all and any friction and difference of opinion, remained in the same camp with them. Every influence tending to draw us into the opposite camp or even to place us in a position of detachment from Continental affairs has, so far, been less effectual than some expected.

More directly significant of the reawakening of the Roman Empire and its return to its original geographical and racial basis, is Italy's cutting loose from her pre-war alliance with Germany and Austria.

Italy did not enter the war on this side, because to have done so would have been a contradiction of history past and prophetic—a denial of the very nature of things. Since Rome was, before the close of the Age, to assume again the mighty rôle of the past, Italy inevitably must unite with what was in effect a Roman Alliance. The first step toward that union was to break, as she did, with her non-Roman associates of the Triple Alliance.

That decisive breach, her subsequent neutral witnessing of the struggle, the extraordinary agitation that finally brought her into war on the side of the Allies—all this prepared Italy for the prominence she now has in the work of restoring to the Roman Empire the cohesion, the strength and the importance that it possessed in the days of its ancient greatness. The memory of that greatness is a vivid one among the Italian people. Not to bury the past but to make it re-live is their ideal. A very eminent Italian has been reported as saying that Rome is again to extend her Empire over the world and to be all that she ever was, the ruling power on earth! That is close enough to the prediction of Scripture!

Of course this involves some form of confederacy of the nations of the Roman earth. There must be a coming together again in close association of these nations, for they are the comparatively modern sub-divisions of the Roman Empire.

So late as the tenth century, says Lord Bryce, in his *Holy Roman Empire* (to which reference has already been made because of its especial interest

in connection with our subject), "national distinctions had hardly begun to exist," and again he says, *à propos* conditions in the fourteenth century: "The most remarkable event in the history of the last three hundred years had been the formation of nationalities, each distinguished by a peculiar language and character and by steadily increasing difference of habits and institutions. And as upon this national basis there had been in most cases established strong monarchies, Europe was broken up into disconnected bodies."

To bring together again these disconnected bodies, to re-unite these national fragments and so reconstitute the body of the Roman Empire, is the task now in hand.

However accomplished, it will be extolled as a most meritorious, desirable work. The fact will be overlooked that such a confederation may be no more pleasing to God than was the project of Babel, conceived in human pride and without regard to His authority and glory, nor to His divine standard of what is for the world's good.

A strange idea is abroad that by getting together, the fallible nations will become infallible. Nations individually do wrong; a collectivity of nations will necessarily do right: such is the assumption. Whereas the fact is that the nations leagued together can be just as forgetful or defiant of God as nations severally can be.

"That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God," we have been

warned by the Lord Jesus. No schemes, however fine seeming, which conflict with His plan of making the Lord Jesus sovereign in earth as in heaven, are approved by God. Since the incarnation of Jesus, and all the more now that His Second Advent is at hand, "the Kingdom of God is preached," to use His very words. Of any policy and its promoters there is this test to be made: Is the Kingdom of God preached; is this project designed in the name of and in the service of the Lord Jesus until He comes: is He, God's anointed King, openly acknowledged as supreme? If so, the policy will be upheld pending the coming of that which is perfect, the reign of the Lord Himself. If not, the policy, for all the human favour it commands, is "an abomination in the sight of God."

How changeable, as well as inferior, are human standards, for want of the divine knowledge of absolute good. At one time it is believed that the independent existence and action of the several nations is the true ideal. At another it is thought better that the nations shall be closely associated and subject to a common authority, even at the sacrifice of individual freedom of action, and to this last opinion the nations concerned are now moving. They are getting ready to play their part in the Roman Empire in the final days of the Age.

Extremely interesting here is this word from the authority already cited. He says: "Very early in Christian history had the belief formed itself that the Roman Empire—as the fourth Beast of Daniel's vision, as the iron legs and feet of

Nebuchadnezzar's Image—was to be the world's last and universal kingdom."

This belief was and is precisely and literally correct. The Roman Empire which, as we have seen, has survived until this day is even now in process of recovering the might and universality of the past. In an astonishing, though transient, renewal of its life and power, this last of the predicted Gentile Empires will confirm the provision of the Book of Daniel.

It has started—this reunion of the Roman lands. The nucleus of the war alliance was Roman: namely, France, Italy, Belgium, Serbia, Greece, Rumania, Portugal, with Britain neither last nor least. Russia, non-Roman, was of the number at first, but dropped out before the end. The United States (not unconnected with Rome by reason of her national descent and the racial character of the main elements of her population) was an Associate not an Ally, a distinction not without interest in this connection. Of the whole Alliance it may be said that there was very little in it that is non-Roman and that very little that is Roman stayed outside.

The most practical result of the League of Nations will turn out to be the promotion of the reunion of the Roman nations. They predominate in the League.

Not that the League of Nations is necessarily the final means to this reunion. The Alliance of

the war days may serve—and be reorganised and perpetuated to that very end. Italy may initiate a new, conscious, deliberate association of Roman nations.

There has been talk of a conference of “Mediterranean Powers”—Italy herself, Great Britain, France, Spain, Greece, Turkey. This conference meeting in Italy, by invitation of the Government, would have the purpose of adjusting any differences between the participating nations and arriving at “a mutual agreement by which the Mediterranean interests of the nations concerned shall form the basis of their projects, so that they shall not be left as now to national initiative or to the partnership of a couple of nations developed at the expense of the others and to the danger of all.”

Such an agreement would be the basis of a confederacy of Roman nations, eventuating in a more and more exact reproduction of the past unity of the Roman earth. Alliances, leagues, conferences and the rest of it, all tend in this direction. It is not, of course, what has been projected by the advocates of the leaguings of all nations without any reference to the fact of Rome’s survival and its destined predominance during the terminal years of this Age.

Prophecy is emphatic in its statement that some half-score of nations are to come together again, and be as in the days of ancient Rome. They are the ten iron toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream Image. Daniel, after interpreting that dream, had his own vision of the four Beasts, each symbolising

four Empires, the very same as the Empires symbolised by the Image, and the fourth Beast was seen to have ten horns. These had the same significance as the ten toes.

When on Patmos, John, the New Testament saint, saw what Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, had seen—this same half score of nations. It was made known to John that, when this Age is near its end, these nations will confederate as we see them even now preparing to do.

Great historians were Daniel and John, for they could write history before it happened. They are at this day still the leading authorities upon world history and politics. That is because “the Spirit of Christ which was in them,” as in all the great Bible prophets, inspired them to write things hidden from human knowledge.

Politically, the witness of Daniel and John is of high and urgent importance. But it has for everybody a direct personal interest too. “O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” cried Daniel, overwhelmed by his visions of things future. This was among the answers made to him: “Many shall be purified and made white.” The one thing needful in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus is simply that—to be purified and made white. Visualise His appearing, and the need is the more evident! Many are fearful of His coming for the very reason that they know the natural unfitness of mankind to face Jesus as God, and therefore, not understanding that a God-provided way out of the difficulty exists, they try to find refuge in the denial that He can come.

Yet that assurance is there : “ *Many shall be purified and made white.*” In the Apocalypse, John tells of those who in the worst hour of this evil Age, before the Lord comes to bring in the new Dispensation, are purified and made white : “ I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” ¹

There is the truth for the time. It is the greatest of the morals to be drawn from prophecy and its fulfilment.

But why wait until tribulation reaches the full ? Already it is two millenniums since “ Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” ²

Then why delay beyond the present moment in profiting by the divine plan whereby the blood of Christ Himself, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, shall purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God ? ³

¹ Rev. vii. 9, 14.

² Heb. xiii. 12.

³ *Ibid.* ix. 14.

XIII

THE NEW AND LAST CÆSAR

A HEAD, a leader having authority—without this, no great enterprise can succeed. Purpose and policy are very soon wanting, decay sets in. Without Cæsar, the Roman Empire must be feeble, halting, incoherent. Rome in revival will therefore have its personal chief. He will be the last Cæsar.

His advent is foretold in Scripture, his portrait painted, his character described, his career pre-written, his ultimate downfall even announced.

While his very name is not, as was the name of Cyrus, told in advance, he does receive such titles as the Man of Sin, the Beast, the Son of Perdition. He will lead the final outbreak of the world's rebellion against its true King, the Lord Jesus.

“No king but Cæsar! We have no king but Cæsar!” will be the defiant cry of his followers, as the return of Jesus is heralded by the signs of the times and the preaching of those who shall read the signs aright. Already this final opposition to the Kingship of Jesus is manifesting itself, now that even the most sceptical are beginning to wonder at the strangeness of current events, and to question whether perhaps, after all, they do mean what believers in prophecy have been saying they mean!

The coming Cæsar, judging by all the signs, is already in the world and his career begun, in however small a way as yet. When, by a decisive circumstance, he is identified as being who and what he is, then the last brief stage of this Dispensation will have begun.

Some striking facts about this man are given in prophecy. From a humble beginning he will rise with great speed to world supremacy. This is easy to believe, for of such careers there have been lesser examples before now.

This sinister man of destiny has an extraordinary capacity for beguiling his fellows, is possessed of strong personal magnetism. His intelligence is of great strength, his gift of diplomacy unrivalled, he is past master of duplicity and intrigue. To cap it all, he has amazing psychic power. And while he can charm, flatter, cajole, captivate, hypnotise, he can at the same time show himself of fierce countenance, a ruthless military conqueror, an iron-handed dictator, grasping for himself political and economic as well as military dominion.

After some victories in battle, he will be powerful enough, with the aid of his adroit diplomacy, to get himself accepted as the Cæsar of the reconstituted Roman Empire.

He will be so accepted, partly in fear, partly in adulation. Besides, he will be upheld and obeyed as the escape from chaos due to the fluctuating, uncalculable proceedings of democratic or any other many-headed governments.

More than that, his rule will be welcomed by all

those who would prefer even Barabbas to Jesus which is called Christ.

“I am come in My own name, and ye receive Me not. Another shall come in his own name; him ye will receive.” The coming Cæsar is that other.

Human envy of Jesus as God seeks at all costs to prove the divinity of mankind. In the so-called religion of humanity, every worshipper can feel that he is doing honour to himself. The logical outcome of the ascription of deity and divine honours to humanity is the apotheosis and worship of some man. That is precisely what is foretold of the new Cæsar. “That Man of Sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”¹

The spiritual subjugation of mankind is indispensable to a Cæsar. For one thing, it is the most powerful means to and guarantee of every other sort of control. Political, economic, military domination—all that is easily obtained and maintained by a spiritual master.

What is more, Cæsarism is not satisfied by anything short of spiritual supremacy. Allegiance to the true God is so much denied to Cæsar. Consequently, self-deification and the claim to worship must in the nature of things be looked for in the coming Cæsar. The first of the prophetic succession of Gentile Emperors insisted upon the worship of his own image.² Roman Emperors

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

² Dan. iii.

have claimed deification and worship. The first Cæsar did so—the last one will, and more boldly.

This Cæsar, “showing himself that he is God,” will seek priestly collaboration. At first, while his power and his pretensions have not yet reached their height, he will look for support to what is left of the professing Christian Church. Later, he will be satisfied with nothing but a new religious organisation, which replaces the very name of the Lord Jesus Christ by his own name. This new organisation will better suit his purpose for the double reason that it will be devoted to the cult of himself and that it will draw into its ranks multitudes whom the very name of Jesus offends. At its head will be the prophesied false prophet, who, presenting himself as a great spiritual teacher, will rally mankind to the worship of Cæsar.¹

And in the background, lending the aid of his supernatural psychic power, will be Satan himself, who delegates his power to the man who is ready to make terms with himself and to lead human opposition to the return and reign of the Lord Jesus.²

“The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me,” said the Lord concerning Satan, as the time of His crucifixion approached. This spirit prince of the world will, to the last, exploit human nature, and excite it to resist his divine Conqueror. John, writing after the Cross, was still obliged to say: “The whole world lieth in the power of the evil one.” That anomaly is timed to end when the Crucified One returns as

¹ Rev. xiii.

² Dan. ii. 36–39.

King. Meanwhile, the same situation persists which existed when, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan offered to Jesus the kingdoms of the world, saying : “ All this power will I give Thee and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine.”¹ Our Lord rejected the offer. His chosen part was to reach the Throne by way of the Cross and to receive the Crown from the hands of God the Father.

The Cæsar who is coming will strike the proffered bargain. There is an instinctive popular belief that worldly advantage may be gained on such terms, and it is confirmed by revelation. “ What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world—— ! ”

Well ! there is the array of Satan. Cæsar, the false prophet and those who follow in their train— all marshalled against the Son of God. “ And they worshipped the Dragon which gave power unto the Beast, and they worshipped the Beast, saying : Who is like unto the Beast ? who is able to make war with him ? ”²

In the chapters on The Covenant with the Jews, Perilous Times, and Armageddon, there is more to be said about the expected Cæsar. Meantime, it may be asked, “ Who is he ? ” Impossible to tell. Some may say, “ He must be an Italian, as he is to head the Roman Empire.” Do not assume that, however, for he may not even be a European at all. The Roman territory

¹ Luke iv. 5-8.

² Rev. xiii. 4.

extended into Asia : be that remembered. Now, as Lord Bryce says, "The intruding Ottoman himself, different in faith as well as in blood, has more than once declared himself the representative of the Eastern Cæsars, whose dominion he extinguished"—and as such the rightful head of the whole Empire no doubt !

The man in question may not ever have been heard of yet. He is perhaps still in obscurity. He cannot be identified yet.

Even the first president of the great confederacy of nations may not be this new Caesar, for quite possibly he will oust some predecessor from that place. One can picture this personage viewing such a confederacy and its president, and, after considering whether to attempt its overthrow or to become the head of it, deciding upon the second course.

It often happens that one sows and another reaps, and possibly the architects of the reconstructed Roman Imperial unity will be overmastered and superseded by an ambitious one who is able to force his way to the head. In that case it may be that the headship of this audacious, adventurous, aggressive superman will be deliberately chosen by those concerned, in preference to the leadership of the man or men who have brought the Roman unity into being, who may be deposed, half in awe and half in admiration of the newcomer, in order to make room for him.

Strange things are to happen before all is over, but the last word is with God. The Psalmist sang of this :

“ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him : fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. . . . For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be : yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth ; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” ¹

¹ Ps. xxxvii. 7, 10, 11.

XIV

PORTENTS OF ANTICHRIST

AS a pendant to the last chapter, it is well to set down some things that show the rise of the new Cæsar to be real and imminent.

The portents of Antichrist are many. As to the term Antichrist, it might be applied in a general way to the trio of persons, supernatural and natural, mentioned in the preceding pages, and to their followers for that matter, or it can be applied particularly to that one who apes the returning Christ in His two characters of God and King. When Christ returns, He is to rule and be worshipped by the nations of the earth, and these are exactly the ambitions of the predicted Cæsar.

For a time he will realise both ambitions. Consequent upon his headship of Rome, he will become predominant all over the globe, he will be deified, he will command world-wide worship. So that, coming before Christ and standing in the place of Christ and setting himself against Christ—the name of Antichrist fits him closely.

The day of sky-rocket careers is already here, and that of the Man of Sin will seem natural. That he should be of humble origin, with no family political traditions, springing out of the unknown, would not hinder his rise to power and

fame. On the contrary, all this would help him. People nowadays like the unknown, the mysterious, for it gives occasion for exciting speculation for the spinning and weaving of legend concerning one who has become conspicuous. Highly flattered are the masses by the thought that one of themselves has risen to the supreme place, since they feel that upon them is cast some reflection of this glory. And the classes are thrilled and dazzled by the steep ascent of one whose force of character and, as it seems, superhuman quality, enables him to overtake their advantages, and rising superior to them, impose his rule upon them.

So far as all that goes, the way is cleared for the dictator. The fashion is all for dictators now. Even the reddest Reds will approve a dictator, as they suppose, of like purposes to theirs, who high-handedly and instantaneously imposes the submission of opponents.

Similarly, there are conservative elements who hope for a strong man who shall make an end of social and industrial unrest and of the international conflict, armed or otherwise, which make conditions increasingly perilous.

The dictator who can assure some satisfaction to both these sections will command a mighty following. The Man of Sin will contrive to give to each a sop large enough to make them regard him as the champion of their respective causes.

For a while, the virtue, wisdom and initiative of the people as a whole has been celebrated, and individual leadership has been at a discount. Indeed, historians have been sneered at, who

attribute decisive results to the activity of powerful personalities. But now the pendulum is swinging back. Strong men and their achievements are exerting their old power over the imagination. A revival of hero-worship is preparing, and this hero-worship will be focused upon the new Cæsar, when he comes into full view of the peoples of the world. The excitement roused by this man, the adulation lavished upon him, half willingly, half of compulsion, will be explained in terms such as we find in Carlyle's *Hero-Worship*, as for example :

“The commander over men, he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated and loyally surrender themselves and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of great men. He is practically, for us, the summary of all the great figures of Heroism : priest, teacher, whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual origin we can fancy to desire in a man embodies itself here, to command over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to do. He is called *Rex*, *Regulator*, *Roi* ; our own name is better, King, *Konning*, which means Can-ning, Able-man. . . .

“The finding of your Ableman and getting him invested with dignity, worship (worth-ship), royalty, kingdom, or whatever we call it, so that he may actually have room to guide according to his faculty of doing it,—is the business, well or ill-accomplished, of all social procedure.”

Such words are better reserved for the King of kings, the Lord Jesus—otherwise applied, the danger is of idolatry and tyranny—especially

now when the signs of the times are expressly forbidding reliance upon any mere human deliverer and announcing that the Lord Himself "is nigh, even at the very door." Until He comes, "fear God and honour the king," says the Apostle. But there is all the difference between that and idolatry of a human chief, the putting of such an one in the room of God.

To sum up, public opinion is being prepared to welcome a superman, a hero, who shall take command of mankind and its destiny. The present unsettlement, verging on anarchy, of national and international conditions, is disposing the public to hail this personage with relief, to exalt him to the highest eminence, to confer upon him unrestricted powers.

History testifies that when normal order and authority have been for a time in abeyance, a strong personal autocracy is to be expected as the sequel.

The religious peculiarities of the superman's career are also foreshadowed in these times. A strange recent precedent exists, even for the prophesied fact that: he shall depart from the faith of his fathers, this being a necessary preliminary, of course, to the "new religion" and the "new church" alluded to in the last chapter. Thus we saw, only very recently, a nation suppressing its traditional religious organisation, as it were, over night.

As for the support which this Cæsar will demand of the Christian Church, there are influences very busily working for the eclipse of the Lord Jesus

Christ, arguing against His deity and seeking to reduce Him to the level of ordinary humanity. If Christ is (or, if they are right, we must say "was") merely man, then it is but a short step from that to say that all men are Christs, and most especially the superman who will assert his own material and spiritual lordship of mankind.

"He must increase and I must decrease," said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus, but in these days there is an idea abroad that He must decrease and man must increase.

Furthermore, the first signs are looming of the numerically larger, avowedly non-Christian "Church" which is to be organised before the end of the Age, to uphold the cult of the superman. There is a gathering up of so-called pre-Christian beliefs—the bringing in of others for which it is claimed that they are more modern than Christianity. The call is being made for a religion that shall unite "the best in all religions" and thus command the support of everybody.

Of course, there can be no true religion that purports to ante-date the Lord Jesus, for "He is before all things."¹ And there can be no religion that comes after Him, because while He is Alpha, He is also Omega, the last as well as the first, the end as well as the beginning. And there can be no non-Christian religion bringing in the best of all religions, because in leaving out Jesus it would leave out the Best. Nor will the peoples of the earth ever be in true religious unity until the visible appearing, before the eyes of mankind, of

¹ Col. i. 17.

the Lord Jesus, when this unmistakable demonstration that He is God will command the allegiance to Himself of all nations and races.

But that moment has not yet arrived and, meanwhile, a great religious organisation is to be at the service of Antichrist.

The ambassador of Christ who went to Athens to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, found that "all the Athenians and the strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Some new thing is greatly craved in these days and in every land. As the Bible is a very old Book, there is a consequent inclination to scorn what it reveals and to prefer any and every other source of knowledge concerning the things beyond human discovery. This fashion, too, will make it the easier to lead the world to put Antichrist in the place of Christ,—until this oracle is made good by the great event:

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly among them of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought—and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." ¹

Then they will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! But blessed are they who do not wait till then—who not having seen, yet have believed.

¹ Jude 14, 15.

X V

THE COVENANT WITH THE JEWS

THE signing of the forthcoming Covenant with the Jews is transcendently important to Gentiles also, for these two reasons. The man with whom it is made will, by that fact, be identified as the latter-day Cæsar, the Man of Sin, the Antichrist. The day on which it is made will be the beginning of the end of this Age, which will then have but seven years to run, before the visible appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophetic historian, Daniel, is again our inspired authority.¹ Through him is conveyed the knowledge that the coming Cæsar will make this Covenant with the Jews. He is to make "a firm covenant"² with them for a septennium. This period comes at the close of a longer period of seventy sevens, or weeks, of years, dating from "the going forth of the commandment to rebuild and restore Jerusalem," after the Babylonian captivity, experienced by Daniel himself, came to its appointed end.

This same miraculous prophecy foretold the first advent of "Messiah the Prince," who was to be "cut off, but not for Himself." Simeon, who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" on

¹ Dan. ix. 24-27.

² *Ibid.* ix. 27, R.V.

the eve of the incarnation of our Lord, was instructed by the chronology of this prophecy as to the time when He should come into the world, as was also Anna the prophetess and others "that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."¹

To follow Messiah's "cutting off," which happened on Calvary, the destruction of Jerusalem was foretold, just as it was by the Lord Himself in His Olivet discourse to the disciples.

"The city and the sanctuary," the temple, were to be destroyed by "the people of the Prince that shall come." The Romans fulfilled this prophecy, and it is the Prince of this people, namely the forthcoming head of the restored Roman Empire, who is soon to make the Covenant with the Jews. The Covenant will relate, of course, to the Jews' position in Palestine. It will make to them important concessions and will afford to them guarantees, both civil and religious.

It will provide for the resumption of the ancient Jewish temple-worship and the renewal of the typical sacrifices. It will be signed for a first provisional term of seven years, but half-way through that term, Cæsar will break faith with the Jews, and tear up the Covenant as a scrap of paper.

The very possibility of this breach of faith will be denied until it occurs, but that does not alter the fact.

Meanwhile, the happenings of to-day show that the Covenant assuredly will be signed. The present position of the Jews in their national home

¹ Luke ii. 25-38.

in Palestine is precarious, and to make that position politically and economically, wholly what they desire, is out of the question, in existing conditions. In particular, the temple and the ancient worship and sacrifice are impossible.

Arab hostility is a barrier to advancement and a menace even to that which the Jews have already gained in Palestine.

The British Mandate, in spite of all it has enabled to be done, has not dispelled the Arab danger. Britain has many responsibilities in other regions, which are the more onerous because of the strained and complex world-condition. The Jews, and the British Government in their interest, are looking for a further guarantee of their position in Palestine, in the shape of an understanding with the Arabs. Negotiations to this end have failed up to the moment of writing, but they are here cited as evidence that a Covenant is looked for by the British Government and the Jews who benefit by the British Mandate.

It was rumoured a little while ago that a bargain might be unofficially negotiated with the Arabs whereby the Jewish claims would be acceded to, on condition that Arab aspirations should be upheld by the influence of world Jewry. A Jewish-American diplomat has lately been devoting his experience and tact to secure harmony between Arabs and Jews.

All this shows the wind to be blowing the Covenant to the signing point.

The Arabs will not necessarily be party to it. We must ask, is there any other people who can

be a menace or a protection, as the case may be, to Palestine and the Jewish position there? What of the Turks? They were masters of Palestine till 1917, when the British forces wrested the land from them.

Now, since their defeat in the world-war, the Turks have recovered Constantinople. They aim to recover Syria, another of their war losses, and they are threatening the position there of France, who has such serious preoccupations elsewhere. Imagine the Turks again in Syria—is Palestine far away? The Turks might not be indisposed to sign a Covenant with the Jews, respecting Palestine as their national home, and the Temple for worship and sacrifice. The sentiment of the Turks as to Palestine cannot be very profound, and a compensating advantage might be arranged. Since theirs has become a secular State, they presumably would have no insuperable objection even to the original site, in which the Temple of Omar now stands, being placed at the disposal of the Jews for the rebuilding of the Temple.

Some other people may eventually be able to menace or guarantee protection to the Jews in their national home. All will soon be plain.

Whoever the man who makes the expected Covenant, he then, will or soon after, be the head of the restored Roman Empire. That this Cæsar shall enter into a Covenant guaranteeing to the Jews all, and more than all they lost at the hands of the Romans nineteen centuries ago, will seem a happy reversal of that ancient injury. Many eloquent and optimistic things will be said on

this theme. The warnings of the prophets will be ignored. The need and promise of Messiah's coming will be ignored likewise. In fact, it will appear to many, that the covenant-signing Cæsar himself is a very Messiah.

The greatest harmony will doubtless prevail. Cæsar will favour and protect and promote the well-being of the Jews, and they on their part will place their world-wide influence—financial, commercial, political, journalistic, intellectual, artistic and what not—at his service for the increase of his power, until the time comes when he breaks the Covenant and from friend turns to enemy.

All this will happen in a short space of time. But that we should expect, for nothing is more remarkable in this day of strange things than the enormous acceleration of the rate at which history moves. Besides, the progress of super-conquerors has ever been astonishingly rapid—think of Cæsar, Mohammed, Napoleon !

Why will the Covenant be violated, and the apparent friendship between Cæsar and the Jews be so harshly broken ? For various reasons. Their prosperity will excite cupidity. Anti-Semitic prejudice, too, will move Cæsar to the breach of good relations with this people. At that time his atheistic purposes will find an obstacle in the very existence, and still more the presence in Palestine, of this Jewish race, whose survival and return to their homeland is an evidence that God is and reigns.

The building again of the Temple and the con-

tinuance, after long interruption, of the Levitical sacrifices and ceremonies will affront Cæsar as Antichrist, because this means denial of worship to himself. He will desire to make the Temple available for the erection of the image of himself and for worship in connection with the new-fangled religion centring round himself deified.

Not only will the Jews in Palestine and the revival of their worship in the Temple be an announcement that Messiah is soon coming, to end the career of the Man of Sin, but a number of the Jews, convinced by the signs of the times, will be zealously preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and announcing the coming of Jesus as Messiah. The false Messiah's object will be to silence those voices.

Antichrist will be aware that the Scripture foretells the royal coming of the Lord to Jerusalem, when He will be seen and believed on by the Jews, who will, according to God's good purpose, have returned thither from the lands of their dispersion.

To put an end, once again, to the presence of the Jews in Palestine might delay or defeat the coming Messiah, so Anti-Messiah will reckon. Hence he breaks the Covenant. He exchanges protection for fire and sword. He causes "the sacrifice and oblation to cease," He defiles the Temple by perverting it to the worship of himself and by setting up there his own image, which is "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." ¹

Yet the broken Covenant will do more at that

¹ Matt. xxiv. 15.

time than all else to turn both Jews and Gentiles to faith in Christ, because it will so completely prove what the Scripture has said concerning the events that will precede His return !

As for the abolition of the Jewish worship in the Temple, God Himself has long since met that difficulty, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Temple sacrifices and ritual were but a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices which cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, but were imposed until a time of reformation. . . . "But Christ, having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats or calves, but through His own blood, entered in once and for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." ¹

Antichrist will suppress the Jews' daily sacrifice, but God will not be looking for this, because the necessary sacrifice was made some two thousand years ago by God the Son, who then "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." So, Christ having been offered once and for all to bear the sins of many, Antichrist cannot affect the spiritual issue.

As to the broken Covenant—God speaks of a better Covenant than that ! It is a Covenant which will not be broken, because it rests on the promise of God, and is made in consideration of the blood of Christ. It runs thus :

¹ Heb. ix. 9-12, R.V.

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . this shall be the Covenant. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.”

This illuminates for us the meaning of the crucifixion. For did not the Lord Jesus say: “This is My blood of the New Covenant”—or Testament; for it is that also since it became operative only through His death. “This is My blood of the New Covenant—which is shed [poured out] for many for the remission of sins.”¹ That is the Covenant the Jews need—the Gentiles, too, and its benefits are offered also to them.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 28.

XVI

PERILOUS TIMES

THERE is no difficulty in believing the prophecy that, in the last days of this Age, "perilous times shall come."¹

Perilous times are upon us now and have been for ten years.

The Lord's account of the last days is this : "Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Since 1914, humanity has been in the first throes of this tribulation.

What a fearful sum of misery and terror is represented by the war and what has resulted from the war !

We never should have believed anyone who told us beforehand what was to be the agony of the years from 1914 to 1924.

Some countries, it is true, have suffered far less than others. Neutral countries are relatively unscathed. The United States and the British Dominions have been immune from much of the trouble. In the British Isles it is the combatants in the war who have borne most of the suffering, though the burden of civilian cares has been indeed a heavy one. And so one may go on,

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 1-7:

giving to each people their place in the mournful scale of tribulation due to war, revolution, famine and pestilence.

If the worst sufferings of the most hapless peoples had been general throughout the earth, so that all had experienced them—the cry would have been: “The great tribulation of prophecy is here already.”

It is not here yet—but it is coming, and when it comes, it will cover the whole earth.

The approach of tribulation can be seen by human vision, and one notices people who still scorn to consult the Bible for guidance as to public affairs, predicting out of their own head the downfall of civilisation—unless something is done by somebody. The question there is—what ought to be done, and who can do it? and this no human being can really tell.

This twentieth century was to have seen so great an advance in civilisation, such a beautification and ennobling of it—and now writers and speakers are questioning whether it can even survive.

Under the head of war alone, scientists are warning the public of tribulation as severe as any spoken of in the Bible, of warring nations carrying the destruction of life to the point of extermination.

The elements of the coming tribulation include famine, pestilence, storms, earthquakes, revolution, persecution, war. All these have been sorely felt since 1914. These cruel scourges are the fruit of the world-disorder, and as this increases they of necessity will increase too.

The tribulation will visit the Jews, as "the time of Jacob's trouble," and also the Gentiles. "The Lord," we are told, "hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land [with Israel], because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."¹

Equally is it said: "The Lord hath a controversy with the nations."² His is "the hand stretched out over the whole earth; and who shall turn it back?"³ The divine controversy with man ever is that man turns away from God. "They have fled from me . . . though I have redeemed them, they have spoken lies against me. They have not cried unto me with their heart . . . they rebel against me."

God the Son, during His sojourn here, renews the divine complaint: "*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. . . . I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*"

At the same time, the Lord Jesus offered Himself to the Jewish nation as their King. Their rejection of this unimaginable blessing, brought them into the tribulation of 70 A.D., the long course of affliction that followed and the climax of tribulation which still awaits them. Foreknowing it all, the Lord wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. . . ." And again: "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a

¹ Hos. iv. 1.

² Jer. xxv. 31.

³ Isa. xiv, 26, 27.

hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”¹

This same Jesus, is He the King of the Jewish nation only: is He not also King of the Gentile nations? Yes, of the Gentile nations also, and for them, as for the Jews, tribulation is the ultimate result of being out of the true relationship with their heavenly King.

He alone can prevent tribulation and give peace. The absence of His divine control is enough to plunge human affairs into chaos.

Even in the absence and rejection of the true King, the Spirit of God has exerted a measure of control over the world. Otherwise the climax of sin and misery would have been reached long ago.

When the Spirit, “He that letteth,”² or restraineth, is taken out of the way, then the ungodly influences will at last and for a short time have free play.

Then the great tribulation will come as a torrent. The removal of all divine restraint upon cruelty, injustice and every evil impulse known to the human heart, will demonstrate the truth of God’s revelation that human beings need redemption and regeneration through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, and that the nations need Him as their King.

It is a very awful theme—this of the tribulation—one that is hard to dwell upon, and all the more

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.

² 2 Thess. ii. 7.

so because of the bitter foretaste that this decade has given.

If only the world knew, even in this day, the things which belong unto its peace !

The people of Nineveh, when they were warned, in consequence of their wickedness that had come up before God : “ Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” cried mightily unto God—and “ God did it not.”

The great tribulation will be the outcome of the rebellion against the Lord, before He returns to take to Himself His great power; and its climax will come as the rebellion also reaches the climax.

The way in which individuals may escape the tribulation is shown in the chapter on “ Resurrection and Life.”

For those who do not take that way, the crisis ahead will be what the prophet says of it : “ A day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of waste and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, and a day of clouds and thick darkness.” ¹

There is going to be a great cleansing, a great overturning and a great upheaval, that rebellion against God’s Son may be put down. The Apostle, reminding us of this, says : “ See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. . . . He hath promised saying, ‘ Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven ’ . . . Wherefore we (who look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith) receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God

¹ Zeph. i. 15.

acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

Yes, a consuming fire against Sin. Sin must and will be driven out of the universe; otherwise God would deny Himself. He must and does, as God, and in righteousness and justice, condemn Sin. Nevertheless He has provided a way of distinguishing between sinners and their sin, of separating them from their sin, having set forth Christ Jesus "to be a propitiation through faith in His blood . . . that He might be just, and the justifier of Him that hath faith in Jesus." ¹

So here we come to the Rock in whose shelter there will be nothing to fear.

¹ Rom. iii. 25, 26.

XVII

ARMAGEDDON

WARS and rumours of wars having marked its whole course, this Age will end, characteristically, at the battle of Armageddon.

The scene of this last war of the Age is definitely pointed out in prophecy. It is "a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."¹ Any military strategist can make a professional inspection of it.

The date of Armageddon will be seven years from the signing of the Covenant by which the modern Cæsar will profess to assure the position of the Jews in Palestine. It will be at the end of the last septennium mentioned in Daniel's great prophecy of the seventy sevens of years.

These seventy septenniums were declared to begin with "the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem," which command was, in due course of history, actually given in the reign of Artaxerxes.² They were to extend unto and beyond the "cutting off" of Messiah at His crucifixion. The fruit of Messiah's sacrifice and the glorious conclusion of the seventy sevens of years are shown in this passage from the prophecy as it was communicated to Daniel.³

¹ Rev. xvi. 16.

² Jer. iii.

³ Dan. ix. 24-27.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

From the cutting off of Messiah, Jewish national history ceased to run, for the definite rejection of their King, which the Jews made when they gave Jesus to be crucified by Pilate, involved a suspension of their national history such as occurred during the Babylonian captivity.

The decree of Cyrus, world-monarch of that day, closed the Babylonian captivity !

The Covenant which the coming world-potentate is to make with the Jews will purport to recognise their national status in Palestine (with a fullness that is impossible under the British mandate alone owing to existing conditions), and it will, as we have seen, also sanction the Jewish worship and sacrifice in a rebuilt Temple.

With the signing of this Covenant, every sound of Gentile opposition to the Jewish position in Palestine will be stilled. In sum, the clock of Jewish national history will be set going again. The course of the seventy septennial periods will resume its flow. There is only one of these left to run. Consequently, seven years from the signing of the Covenant, the prophecy will have its consummation, and Messiah will appear to “bring in everlasting righteousness.”¹

Terrible things will happen first, for “even unto

¹ Dan. ix. 24.

the end shall be war ; desolations are determined,"¹ says this prophecy, thus denying the hope of human-made peace, while giving instead a better, surer hope.

The Covenant made by the new Cæsar for one week or septennium is mentioned in the prophecy, and then its violation "in the midst of the week" when he causes "the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." After that is a picture of the woe, terror, desolation of the end.

That is the time of Armageddon, which is above all a war against God and against His Son. It is a war also against Jerusalem and the Jews, inasmuch as Jerusalem is "the city of the great King" and the Jews are chosen servants of His cause.

Men making war against God and against His Son ! The idea is fantastic you may say. Yet it had happened twice before and will happen again.

It happened when Christ was in the cradle. It happened when He was nailed upon the Cross. It will happen again as He comes to wear the crown.

This deicidal warfare, particularly in its third phase, is foretold in the second Psalm. "Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing ?"²

In the Revelation we hear of a summons going forth from the Beast and the false prophet to "the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to

¹ Dan. ix. 26, R.V.

² Ps. ii. 1. The more precise rendering of the word "heathen," as it appears in the Authorised Version of the Old Testament, is "nations," *i.e.* Gentile nations, as distinguished from the Israelites.

gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Accordingly, "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying: Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."¹

Is this possible? Consider first of all whether the nations would like at this moment to see the Lord Jesus appear to rule them. Of course, there are individuals in each nation who await the Lord's coming with unqualified joy. But the question is whether a nation as such, acting through its ruling authority, would voluntarily accept the Lord as King were He now to appear.

If the nations and their governments are willing, then there will be no battle of Armageddon. If any one or more nations is willing, though the majority are not, fortunate will such nations be!

At the present time, the nations simply do not admit the fact that the Lord Jesus will soon return to claim their allegiance and to rule them as their King.

But the signs of the times will soon compel a general recognition that the Lord's return is imminent. Unbelief will disappear, but there will be much hostile belief.

Herod was a hostile believer. It is plain that he knew the Lord Jesus to be the prophesied King of the Jews, Heir to the Throne of David, the Messiah. Therefore it was that "he sent and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and

¹ Ps. ii. 2, 3.

in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time that he had diligently inquired of the wise men." ¹

The wise men from the East had arrived saying : " Where is He that is born King of the Jews . . . for we are come to worship Him ? " and we read that " when Herod the King had heard these things, *he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.*" ² The " good tidings of great joy " brought consternation to Herod and the rest of the hostile believers in Jerusalem. They knew perfectly who the Babe of Bethlehem was, and Herod and the chief priests and scribes were able to direct the wise men to the very place where the Scripture had announced He should be born. Herod urged them to return and verify to Him the fact that the professed birth of the divine Child ³ had actually taken place, because he was resolved to kill this, the Son of God. When the travellers departed into their own country another way, Herod, fearing that they suspected his deicidal purpose and had given the alarm, ordered the wholesale slaughter of the innocents, that the Son of God might have no chance of escaping death.

Then the crucifixion ! This, too, was claimed as being one fulfilment of the second Psalm, by Peter and John and a gathering of Christians, who, as reported in the Acts of the Apostles, lifted up their voice in praise to God, " Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said : Why did the nations rage and the peoples imagine vain things ? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers

¹ Matt. ii. 16.

² *Ibid.* ii. 3.

³ Isa. ix. 6, 7.

were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.”¹

The next fulfilment of Psalm ii. is now very near, when the kings and rulers of the world will set themselves to war against God and against His Christ.

The challenge is thus answered: “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure.”

The Gift of Love rejected—for “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” that He might be the Lamb slain for the taking away of the world’s sin. He is now offered as King of the Nations, whose reign shall be righteousness and peace, which shall be the promised Kingdom of God on earth. Again the Son is rejected and the reign of sin continues on the earth.

Therefore God “hath a controversy with the nations” whom He will make to feel the weight of His displeasure.

And in spite of their resistance God affirms: “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”²

Then speaks Christ Jesus Himself.³ “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the nations for

¹ Acts iv. 24–27.

² Ps. ii. 6.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 7, 8.

Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."

Magnificent assurance that all will yet be right with the world, when its divine Possessor and King returns! But before He establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, the world-system must receive the stroke of Christ as the Stone. Therefore: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."¹

Self-confident to the last, the hosts of Anti-christ gather at Armageddon: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision."

"These shall make war against the Lamb."

Elsewhere, note has been made of the terrifying control which science has lately gained over the forces of nature—terrifying because of the destructive use that is made thereof. At any moment there may be announced some new discovery that will give the nations an unimaginable power to destroy—that will seem to put the very heavens at their mercy. The scientific means available will seem to the aggressors at Armageddon to assure victory, especially as the no-less-terrible psychic force of the Evil One will be exerted on the side of these rebel armies.

On Patmos, the Apostle John saw, prospectively, "the heavens opened, and behold, a white horse and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war."

Also John saw "the Beast and the kings of

¹ Ps. ii. 9.

the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army."

But He overcomes them, "for He is Lord of lords and King of kings."

Let our foreview of the last armed conflict of the Age conclude with the witness of the Psalmist. Even now another warning, a last appeal to the nations! A chance is offered to form part of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of being swept away, that a clean place may be made. So we read: "Be wise now, therefore, ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth: Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

May that nation which is dearest to each reader of these pages, be wise and be instructed and serve and rejoice in the Lord, remembering that "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him!"

PART III

THE LORD'S RETURN AS SUN OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

XVIII

“HE THAT SHOULD COME”

“ART thou He that should come, or look we for another?”¹ they asked Jesus when He was here last time.

“Are you the Coming One, or are we to be looking for some one else?”

The Coming One, Messiah, has been promised over and over again in the Scriptures and in His two advents—the first one in humiliation, the second in glory.

Is Jesus the promised Messiah—is He the One whom the people of that day were to recognise as Messiah, the Man of Sorrows? Is He the Returning One, whom the world should now be expecting as Messiah in glory?

Jesus said that He was the promised Christ, or, as the Jews say, Messiah. When asked, “Art thou He that should come?” He pointed to the miracles He was performing and the message He was delivering, for these identified Him as the Christ of Scripture-prophecy.

In the present widespread expectancy of a Coming One, it is well to know *who* this Coming One will be. No need to rely on human guess-work or invention! The Lord Jesus Himself has

¹ Luke vii. 19.

said that He, and no one else, is the Christ of the first advent, and the Christ of the second and future advent. Jesus certainly spoke of other Christs—but only of *false* Christs. He spoke of Himself as Christ in such a way as to deny all possibility of there being any other Christ. Meek and lowly in heart as He showed Himself to be, He who is the Truth taught without flinching and without compromise that He and He only is the Christ.

Christhood through sacrificial death, followed by a glorious sovereignty—this was His teaching concerning Himself. No Crown until after the Cross. The Crucifixion is indeed the decisive proof that Jesus is the Christ. The same fact is in strong relief in the Scripture account of His adoptive father's dream vision, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."¹

Throughout His ministry on earth the Lord Jesus, as we have seen, proclaimed Himself to be the Christ of prophecy. When the woman at the well told Him that she knew Messiah was coming, who was called Christ, He plainly told her, "I that speak unto thee am He."²

That many would resent the truth of His Christhood He was aware, for it was after His answer to "Art *Thou* He that should come?" that He added those pathetic words, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."³

Human nature takes sore offence at the sufferings and glory of Christ Jesus and the gifts He

¹ Matt. i. 21.

² John iv. 25, 26.

³ Luke vii. 23.

offers to mankind as the fruit of suffering and glory. Even some of His disciples murmured at His wondrous discourse in which He set Himself forth as the Bread of Life; and He, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured, said unto them, “Doth this offend you?” From that time, we are told, many of the disciples went back and walked no more with Him. When Jesus then asked the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Simon Peter said, and all of us who are believers say the same to this day, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure *that Thou art the Christ*, the Son of the living God.”¹

When the Lord Jesus was revealing the future to His disciples, who had asked Him for the signs of the end of this Age and of His coming, He took occasion to expose the false pretensions of those who would arise claiming to be Christ. “For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets.” How shall the false Christ, and above all the chief among these deceivers, who is to arise at the close of the Age, be recognised as false? Not so much by their words, for who would expect from a false Christ any save fine-sounding preachments? Their marvellous deeds, also, will be misleading to the uninstructed, because, as our Lord announced, they “shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect.”

The false Christs are to be known by the manner of their appearing, so totally different from the

¹ John vi. 67-69.

manner in which Jesus, the one true Christ, has said He will appear. Of His own return He said : " They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." No false Christ can accomplish this miraculous and glorious emergence from heaven. They are reduced to presenting themselves in a more or less commonplace manner, characterised by something unusual, no doubt, which, however, should impress no one who remembers the Lord's warning, " Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth : behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not."

The final, fatal blow to the pretensions of any false Christ is, of course, that he does not bear the wounds of the Cross. When the last and boldest of the false Christs comes forth, seeking to usurp the place of Jesus the true Christ, then will that challenge of doubting Thomas have *its proper application* : " Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

No Christ who is not a wounded Christ is anything but a false Christ. Jesus, our Lord, was wounded for our transgressions. Therefore His wounds to us who believe are, like Himself, precious. Those wounds are the sign of all His Passion has done for us, and they are the everlasting memorial of the love which moved Him to give His life for us.

Yes! Jesus is the Christ that was and is and is to

come. In His life, in His death, in His resurrection life, He was and remains the Christ. Appearing to the disciples, the risen Christ Jesus proved by the evidence of His wounds His identity with the crucified Christ. Upon His ascension into heaven, those who beheld Him go were assured that : “ This same *Jesus* ” will return.

The Christ whom the apostles preached was Jesus. At Pentecost, Peter’s great sermon told out the truth that Jesus of Nazareth is “ a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs,” is the prophesied Holy One, and that “ God hath made *that same Jesus* whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ,” having raised Him up and exalted Him in accordance with David’s prophecy : “ The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”

Stephen bore the same testimony when, as his assailants were stoning him to death, “ he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and *Jesus* standing on the right hand of God and said, ‘ Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man . . . ! ’ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord *Jesus*, receive my spirit.”

When Philip talked with the Ethiopian, “ he preached unto him *Jesus*.”

That the Christ is Jesus was proved to Saul, when he asked, “ Who art Thou, Lord ? ” and received the answer, “ I am *Jesus*.”

Always, thereafter, did Paul preach the truth with a particular clearness. The name of Jesus

was dear to Paul, as it is to all who know most of what that name means.

As for the beloved disciple, he is strong in testimony, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"¹ "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."²

The closing book of the Bible is emphatic and explicit, even beyond all the rest, in showing Jesus to be the returning Christ. The Revelation of Jesus Christ is the very title of the book. We are therein assured that "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." The book gives us the message of the One who said to John: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things unto the churches." To make mistake impossible, the message of the book is stated to be from Jesus Christ who "loveth us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."³

The final promise of the Bible is: Surely, I come quickly. And who this Christ is, who is coming quickly, John reminds us by his eager response: "Even so, come—Lord Jesus!"

¹ 1 John ii. 22.

² 1 John v. 1.

³ Rev. i. 5, R.V.

XIX

THE VISIBLE RETURN OF CHRIST

THE real, literal, personal, visible, bodily return of the Lord Jesus is what the world is to expect.

“They shall *look upon Me*, whom they have pierced,” the Old Testament says.¹ “They shall *see* the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,”² said the Lord Jesus when, during His first Advent, He announced His second Advent. “Behold He cometh with clouds and *every eye shall see Him*,”³ is the message repeated from on high in the book of the Revelation.

Nothing could be plainer ! It should be needless to answer the strange objection that these words are symbolic, and are not intended to convey the meaning which they bear upon the face of them. The Bible deals in facts. Its purpose is to give a knowledge of certain predominantly important facts. It has a mathematical exactitude and shows the precision of an architect or engineer. Some symbolism, some imagery, we do find in the Bible, but generally as an aid to the understanding of the exposition of the literal, definite facts to which the Book is devoted.

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

² Matt. xxiv. 30.

³ Rev. i. 7.

Some of the prophecies are expressed symbolically, but all are fulfilled literally, and, as a rule, the literal explanation of them is forthcoming even before their literal fulfilment takes place. For example, the Image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a prophecy given symbolically, but a few hours afterward came the interpretation thereof, showing that this symbol had reference to real Empires, one being Nebuchadnezzar's own, and the others having come into real, literal existence since.

In many cases we have, not a symbolical, but rather a poetical expression of some fact. Thus, "There shall come a rod or shoot, out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his root." This was simply another way of stating the genealogical fact that Jesus the Messiah would be the descendant of Jesse, the father of King David. "I am the Root and Offspring of David" ¹ is another expression bearing upon the genealogy of our Lord, for He was the Offspring of David by natural descent through His mother Mary, herself descended from David, and He was in the eyes of the law descended from David because of His putative, adoptive father, Joseph, who was also of Davidic descent.

"The Root of David" expresses the divine relationship of the Lord Jesus to him who was, according to the flesh and by reason of His Incarnation, His ancestor.

One prophetic poesy is this: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise

¹ Rev. xxii. 16.

out of Israel.”¹ Here we have Jesus, shown as the Star, one of the many beautiful poetic names that Scripture gives Him, literally predicted to arise, as He actually did, out of the nation of Israel and the tribe of Judah. He being the heir to the Davidic kingdom, whose bounds, as we know, will under His reign include the whole earth, we have this fact given in the words “a Sceptre shall arise.”

But more matter of fact is the phrasing of other prophecies of the Lord’s first and second Advents. A spade is called a spade. That there may be no mistake by the readers, the language used is as literal and definite as the fact.

The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus as an infant is thus predicted: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” His Deity, and His manifestation of Deity also find mention, thus: “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” His Davidic inheritance comes before us thus: “Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David.”²

This literal prophecy of His Incarnation was literally fulfilled.

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

What an inspired conjunction of fact in prophecy

¹ Num. xxiv. 17.

² Isa. ix. 6, 7.

—the timeless, the everlasting One, God the Son, becomes manifest in the flesh, is made in the likeness of men, takes upon Himself the form of a servant and comes into the world to save sinners. And the great event of His birth occurs precisely and literally in the place foretold, in Bethlehem.

All the more because of His humble entry into the world and the lowly position He assumes during His first appearance here, He is, as Isaiah literally foretold, “despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Notwithstanding, He pursues His sacrificial purpose to the end, and, just as the same prophet said He would, “He hath poured out His soul unto death.”

Ah, let us trust and worship a God who through His Spirit has literally declared, and through His beloved Son has literally fulfilled, that prophecy—God the Son, “despised and rejected,” “oppressed and afflicted,” “brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” in order that He might “justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” Seven centuries in advance it was given to the prophet to know that the Redeemer would be “numbered with the transgressors,” and would “bear the sin of many and make intercession for the transgressors.” How can we think that prophecy is not to be taken literally, after making a study of Isaiah liii?

Not only shall He bear the iniquities of them who are willing for this, but “When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed. . . . He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” This is the prophecy of

regeneration through faith in Him crucified as the Lamb of God.

One has heard the argument that the Lord's return means the coming of His Spirit, invisibly, to work His will in the hearts of men. That idea is a wholly mistaken one, for the Holy Spirit is here now, His influence being responsible for what good there is in the world, His special mission to the world being "to reprove the world of sin, of judgment and of righteousness,"—a mission which may be summed up as that of making known to men and women the truth concerning Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Him risen from among the dead, Him reascended into heaven, and Him to come again. The Holy Spirit is now nearing the limit of the conquests which are to be His in this Age.

That the invisibly present Spirit will establish God's Kingdom upon earth was never promised. The human instrument is a failure. That is why the Spirit cannot bring in a new world-order. That is why the world is to witness the visible, bodily coming of the Son of God in person.

"Thine eyes shall *see* the King in His beauty." ¹

¹ Isa. xxxiii. 17.

X X

HOW THE LORD WILL COME

“**J**ESUS CHRIST cometh in the flesh.”
He did come in the flesh at His first Advent.

He will come in the flesh at His second Advent.

The great mystery of Godliness is—Jesus as God manifest in the flesh.¹

In the cradle He was God manifest in the flesh.

He was God manifest in the flesh as He lived and taught and as He suffered here on earth.

In His transfiguration—when there was granted to Peter, James and John a sight of His full beauty and glory in Incarnation and a foreview of His majestic power and coming—He just as really was God manifest in the flesh.

In rejection He was God manifest in the flesh.

Betrayed, He was still God manifest in the flesh.

Standing on trial before Pilate, He was God manifest in the flesh.

Scourged, spat upon, mocked at, insulted, assaulted, in all ways maltreated, He was still God manifest in the flesh.

On the Cross, Jesus was God manifest in the flesh.

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

In death, in burial, still God manifest in the flesh.

In Resurrection, when He rose again, triumphant over death, Jesus was still the incarnate Christ, God manifest in the flesh.

As He then walked and talked anew with His disciples, He was no less than before, God manifest in the flesh.

When He was taken up and the disciples watched His ascent heavenward until a cloud received Him out of their sight, He was, just as truly, God manifest in the flesh, and continues so to be while, to us unseen for the time, He still lives and makes intercession for His flock.

And when He comes again to call to Himself His own, when He comes again in His glory to rule the world that once rejected Him—still and for ever, He will be God manifest in the flesh.

The Incarnation of the Lord Jesus, God the Son, is, since Bethlehem, an eternal fact. The Incarnation will not be revoked. This we may know, if only by the fact that the wounds of the Cross have been carried, through death and the tomb, and by resurrection and ascension, into heaven.

Just as surely as doubting Thomas recognised and worshipped Jesus as his Lord and God, because of those wounds, so surely will the world recognise and worship Him when He reappears—
“For every eye shall see Him and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him.”¹

“All that you say about the Lord’s Second

¹ Rev. i. 7, R.V.

Coming is self-evident," some sceptic may say, "provided that the authority of the Bible is accepted. But why should it be accepted?"

There is one reason, sufficient in itself even without any other, why the truth and authority of the Bible must be accepted, and that is its unique power of revealing the things of the future before they come to pass. Here is the touchstone and proof that the Bible is God's inspired message to mankind, disclosing to us the great truths of time and eternity.

Controversy respecting Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh has been persistent through the centuries. The Apostle John in his first Epistle says :

"Many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God ; and this is that spirit of Antichrist of which ye have heard that it should come and even now already is it come into the world"¹

John completes this pronouncement by saying in his second Epistle :

"For many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus cometh [the tense is different from that used in the first Epistle and covers His next appearing] in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist."¹

Let us all turn a deaf ear, then, to false prophets and deceivers, who have misled so many, and

¹ 1 John iv. 1-3.

² 2 John 7.

remember that there is more than meets the eye in the denial of Jesus Christ coming in the flesh—that it has really a supernatural origin. It means opposition to all that is founded upon the coming of the Son of God in the flesh.

By descending to the human He has made possible the lifting of the human up to the divine.

By the fact that He took part of flesh and blood, He was, to begin with, able as the one perfect Man to do perfectly the will of God. This no other has done: All, save Himself, “have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”⁴

Further than that, the Lord Jesus, the incarnate Christ, because He was man and perfect man, was able to make, for the benefit of mankind, that sacrifice on the Cross of which the animal sacrifices in the Temple were prophetic.

These were valued by God because they were the prospective representation, the forecast of the true sacrifice to be made, in due course, by Jesus Himself, as “the Lamb of God.” When the time came for that supreme sacrifice, the time for the old sacrifice ended: “For it is not possible,” says the Apostle, “that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He [Jesus] cometh into the world He saith [the Apostle quotes in this connection from the prophetic message of Psalm xl.]: Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings for sin Thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which were offered by the law. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the

⁴ Rom. iii. 23.

first [the former animal sacrifices] that He may establish the second, by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”¹

Does Incarnation appear to some incompatible with the divine glory of Jesus as the Son of God? He Himself does not think so. Because the flesh cannot dim His glory but He can glorify the flesh in which He dwells. So we read that though He has a body it is a glorious body.²

One reason of the Incarnation, as we have seen, was that Jesus might represent man before God, and especially as bearing our sins, for He, hanging incarnate on the Cross, vicariously suffered in the place of believing sinners, being made sin for us, who Himself knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

The Incarnation has as its final reason that Jesus may represent God to man. For He is “the image of the invisible God”³ and though “no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

The invisible God is a God whom the world is but too ready to disobey, to forget, or even to deny. Mankind demands a God who can be *seen*, and that demand is to be satisfied.

The Lord Jesus has already come as the visible expression of the love of God. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”⁴

¹ Heb. x.

² Col. i. 15.

³ Phil. iii. 21.

⁴ 1 John iv. 10.

But that was twenty centuries ago, and the world is questioning whether it ever really happened that God was manifest in the flesh, and—for those who should be willing to accept the sacrifice—bare “in His own self our sins on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.”¹

When the Son of God returns and shows Himself as having been crucified, as being the Judge of the nations and the King of the earth, the visible demonstration that God is will be complete.

Then all flesh shall see Him, who, at His second Advent, as at His first Advent, will be able to say : Now that you have seen Me, ye have seen the Father.

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

XXI

THE DESCENT TO EARTH

THE descent to the earth of the Son of God will mark the end of this Age and the beginning of the new Age.

“What if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?” This challenge the Lord Jesus made to those who were murmuring at His teaching that He is the Bread of Life.

“Doth *this* offend you,” said He; “what if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?” Ascend He did when He had died and risen again!

To-day the Lord’s message to a murmuring, doubting world is this: What if ye shall see me, the Son of Man, *descending* from whence I ascended!

He will descend! And that will silence all murmurs, doubts, criticisms, respecting His Deity and every other one of the truths about Him.

He will descend, as surely as He ascended. “Descend” is the right, the scientific word. Once upon a time, the Lord’s ascension would have been scouted as a scientific impossibility. The law of gravitation would have been invoked to disprove the ascension and those who believed in it despised as superstitious. But now, human

beings have themselves, in an imperfect, cumbersome way, learnt to overcome gravitation and ascend upward from the earth.

What a surprise the wiseacres of the past would have if they came back and saw aviators establishing a height record and other aviators setting off on a flight round the world !

The more our scientists learn about God's methods of operation in the realm of His natural creation, about the " laws of nature," as the saying goes, the more clearly it appears that these laws of nature are *enabling* rather than *disabling*.

And, after all, it was the *second-hand* scientists rather than the original scientists, who used to make such a pother about the laws of nature " forbidding " the events and deeds recorded in the Bible.

Moreover, the chief point is that God is not limited, as human scientists are, by the operation of His natural laws, amazingly and unsuspectedly extensive as their operation is now discovered to be.

What if God can work through supernatural laws far mightier and wider in their operation than any natural laws ! Why, we are now only just getting a glimpse of the vast scientific possibilities, under natural law, of transcending limitations to which the human dwellers on this earth are as yet subject.

Things that to-day are not even dreamt of by the most enterprising of our scientists, may to-morrow be practical realities of life, together with the telephone, radio-equipment and aeroplane.

Such being the wonder of the laws of nature, what may not be true of the laws of *super-nature*, the laws of miracle, as they may properly be called !

They must be more than able to account for the resurrection from among the dead of the Son of God—more than able, also, to account for His ascension, when He was “received up into heaven.”

And if human beings—whose knowledge even of natural laws must always be partial, relative—can accomplish the scientific marvels we already know, what cannot God accomplish ?

How short-sighted and narrow-minded and negatively superstitious we should be, if at this time of day we refused to believe that God, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

“We cannot see Him, so He cannot be there,” is some people’s reasoning, though they may not express themselves in terms so blunt.

Many things exist, although we cannot see them or be otherwise aware of them through any of our senses. Science has by artificial means vastly enlarged the sphere of operation of our senses. The microscope, the telescope, are an old story. The X-rays have brought another aid to vision. What would the untutored savage think who should hear a mere report of all these things ?

As for radio-communication, whatever would the destructive critics of the Bible have said

through all these years had the Bible happened to mention that the human voice would one day be audible across oceans and continents? They would have outpoured their bitterest contempt upon this prediction, as they have upon the Biblical predictions concerning a matter far more important than what human beings are going to say and do among themselves; namely what God has done and will do in His dealings with humanity.

Radio - communication, however, provides us with a helpful analogy here. If the voice of some human potentate is to be heard throughout the world, his message being broadcast North, South, East and West, cannot the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to whom is given all power in heaven and earth—cannot He, by still more wonderful process, make His voice heard on earth if He so please!

Television is the next thing. The sight of the coming Cæsar will be projected to the ends of the earth. Radio-vision will be among his chief means of maintaining his ascendancy. Majestically arrayed, with imposing attitude and gesture, uttering some great proclamation, he will make himself seen by millions of humanity throughout the globe.

So much the more can the Lord Jesus Christ, if and when He wills to do so, make Himself seen across the immense distance to which He has for the time withdrawn Himself.

Now we understand (if only by analogy, for divine television is surely more marvellous than

methods of human discovery) how Stephen the Martyr was able to see his Lord in the heavens.

The conquest of distance to be made when the Lord descends from heaven is doubtless greater than all these.

We can imagine sceptical people expatiating upon the length of time required for light to travel from the farthest star and adding something on, to account for any extra distance to heaven. How, at the greatest speed known, could the Lord, when He returns, descend from heaven and to earth within the necessary limit of time! This is a stumbling-block to some. Humanity is of course not competent, in the present imperfect state of even its scientific knowledge, to discuss the point. It must still be a matter of faith, and the days are not now very many before the Lord will have made His great descent to earth. And then the talk of mankind will be not so much of how, or how quickly, He descended, but of His being arrived and visibly present.

Faith in the assertion of the Bible is really all that is needed to be going on with, until faith is turned into sight. "By faith," says the Bible, "we understand that the worlds were made by the Word of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear"—*i.e.* that the visible world was made out of the invisible.¹ Higher critics of that day scoffed at such a statement no doubt, but what we know now of the constitution of matter bears it out.

Since even twentieth century science knows

¹ Heb. xi. 3.

nothing of Deity's personal activities, nothing of supernatural law, and relatively little even of natural law, it is impossible for anyone to say whether speed, whether distance, as we understand them, have quite the same significance in this connection that we should suppose. Of course, we must accept the Biblical account of heaven as being a place to which the Lord Jesus Christ ascended and where He now, still incarnate, is and remains, pending the time of His descent to earth. From heaven to earth is a distance which no telescope can enable the eye to cross. What a long time, then, the descent will take. Yes, at rates of speed known to us! But consider this! Rates of speed, even as observed by human beings, range from the astoundingly slow to the astoundingly rapid.

Ignoring all the slowest, we begin with snail speed. A long way after that, there is foot speed, then horse speed, bird speed. Invention has given us train speed, which amazed and even alarmed our ancestors; aeroplane speed, which would have been incredible to them; then, quicker still, various rates of bullet speed. Nature again shows us sound speed and light speed with its equivalent, radio speed. Higher up the scale there are many other speeds no doubt. Then highest, swiftest of all, there is Christ speed.

Consider again, that Jesus, as God, has the freedom of dimensions unknown and imagined by us, which may well affect this problem of His descent to earth.

Enough! All things are possible with God,

the infinity of whose power becomes more evident as human knowledge increases. After all it has been human ignorance, not knowledge, that has prompted rejection of the Bible and its affirmations concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He, the great God and our Saviour (*see Titus ii. 13*) who is the Lord of time and space, knows how to subdue them to His purpose, when He fulfils His own word : *I will come again.*

XXII

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

“**T**HE Lord alone shall be exalted in that day!” When the Lord Jesus comes, He only will be exalted. What a beautiful, what a perfect end to the human ambitions and envies and rivalries, personal and national, that have so cursed the world!

“The loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.”¹

And rightly so. The Lord Jesus when He comes will come as Son of God. He will come also as Son of Man, *Ecce Homo*! He is the one ideal human being. Human glory is therefore properly centred in Him.

No nation can glory in His presence.

He is the Consoler, the Deliverer, the Protector and Shepherd, the Redeemer from sin of the people Israel, whose long affliction and chastisement is to end when He comes. Then the danger they have known will turn to safety, the shame to honour, hatred felt toward them will be turned to love and trust. “The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy, the King of Israel is in the midst of thee. Thou

¹ Isa. ii. 17.

shalt not see evil any more." That they will be greatly used by the Lord in His royal service is certain.

But He Himself is the Heir to the dominion and glory promised to Israel, because He is the true and greater Israel, the true Vine.

"Israel is an empty vine," said the prophet of the people Israel.¹ "Yet had I planted thee a noble vine wholly a right seed. How, then, art thou turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?"

Thus things were, until the Lord Jesus came saying: "I am the true Vine."

The first Adam fails and falls; Christ as the second Adam comes and carries out the divine ideal and inherits the promise made to Adam. The first Israel, the first vine, fails and falls; Christ, the second Israel, the true Vine, fulfils the divine will and inherits the promise. Out of Egypt did God call His Son, the people Israel, but His purposes for and through them they did not fulfil, and afterwards His greater Son was called from Egypt, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt have I called *My Son*." ²

After the first Israel's probation, and failure, to the Gentiles was given world-control; "a kingdom, power and strength and glory." The Gentile probation is ending now and in failure. The human instrument always breaks in God's hand. The next word then will have to be: "Out of heaven have I sent My Son!"

¹ Hos. x. 1.

² Matt. ii. 15.

So He is soon to come, the true Gentile, for He has, according to the flesh, some Gentile ancestors. He it is that "shall rise to reign over the Gentiles and in Him shall the Gentiles trust." ¹

He is the greater David, Heir to the Covenant whereby "I have sworn unto David My servant. . . . I will make Him My first-born, higher than the kings of earth. . . . His throne as the days of heaven." ²

In the heavenly places they take joy in exalting, worshipping and glorifying the Lord Jesus. No wonder that on earth "all kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him," and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Of the wonders of Christ's millennial rule we learn much in the Bible, and yet the half is doubtless not told us. After rebellion has been broken, and the nations judged, and His divine authority established, then the manifold blessings of His wondrous reign will begin to flow.

Peace is the first of these, of course. "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth." ³ A hint of resistance to this His will, and—"Be still and know that I am God!" ³

The whole creation recovering from the pre-millennial disorders, the earth will be marvellously fertile, assuring nations and individuals of freedom from any economic cares or bondage to their fellow-creatures. The struggle for existence that has broken so many hearts will cease. The destructive and belligerent instincts in men and beasts will be brought under control by Him

¹ Rom. xv. 12.

² Ps. lxxxix.

³ Ps. xlvii.

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whom even the winds and waves, and not less the heart, must obey. Fear will be banished from the earth—fear of everything save the divine displeasure.

Knowing Him as both King and God, the nations will obey and will worship the Lord Jesus. "All the nations shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name."

Disease and deformity will cease to infect and afflict a world governed by the great Victor over sin. He whose very name is the Lord our Righteousness, will put His ban upon injustice and unrighteousness.

"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord."

What is there more to say? Before very long these things will come to pass, and that glorious reign will have begun. After all the turmoil and revolt and sin and horror, then it will be that "the whole earth is at rest and is quiet: they break forth into singing."¹

What is lovelier than the inspired picture King David gives us of what the greater David and His rule of earth shall be! "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."

¹ Isa. xiv. 7.

PART IV

THE LORD'S RETURN AS
MORNING STAR

XXIII

“ I WILL COME AGAIN ”

WHAT a miracle the universe is, even as we imperfectly know it !

We have all heard of the man who admitted of William Shakespeare that, “ Things came intill his head that would never have come intill mine.” Ourselves, likewise, should be constrained to admit that things are in the mind of God that never would have come into the mind of man.

Nevertheless, it is a human temptation simply to take for granted the Creation, so far as it can be observed, and instead of accepting it as evidence of the power and Deity of its unseen Creator, to base upon His own Creation the very denial of His existence. Hence, all that human theorising which amounts to saying that the Creation created itself. This theorising is not even plausible scientifically, but it seems to exonerate men and women from what is to human nature the distasteful obligation of reverence to and love of a personal God ; it spares human pride and envy of God.

Drawing nearer to mankind, making the evidence of His being, His Deity, His personality, still clearer, God has become manifest in the flesh in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

The people of those first Advent days could

actually see God face to face. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us—full of grace and truth. . . . Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us."¹

This evidence of God's "eternal power and Godhead" was rejected in its turn. Before, when God manifested what might be known of Himself only through His creation, He had been too remote, too grand, lofty; now in Christ Jesus He came too near, stooped too low, according to humanity's way of thinking, for "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." What is more, "being found in fashion as a man," He went further and "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross." Thereby He raised up against Himself "the offence of the Cross," still further hurting the pride of natural humanity, though for its good. God visible, God in humility and humiliation and God sacrificing Himself for mankind is denied even more than God invisible in His exalted Majesty as Creator. In fact, there is no human being to this day, who can call Jesus, the Lord, save by the aid of the Spirit of God. It is not in mere human nature to do it. The Spirit of God must and does move believers to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and God. Otherwise, humanity does not so acknowledge Him.

¹ John i. 14; 1 John i. 1, 2.

But a change is coming. When God the Son, the visible manifestation of God, embodiment of the fulness of the Godhead, shall reappear—but this time with commanding evidence of His Deity and demonstrations of His authority as Creator—then unbelief will meet its end!

That wonder will be preceded by another, beheld and shared in only by believers, namely, the fulfilment of the promise made by the Son of God on the eve of His crucifixion: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there ye may be also."

The pledge is to return to gather not only His original disciples but also those "who shall believe on Me through their word,"¹ unto the present day. More than a pledge, it is the expression of the Saviour's yearning for the companionship of His own people. Thus He prayed before He went out to face betrayal: "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."²

This word to the Father, God-like in its confidence, filial in its love, cannot be passed over. "My glory, which Thou gavest Me . . . Thou lovedst Me, before the foundation of the world."

There speaks God the Son, the only begotten of the Father, He who is before and above all things, by whom all things consist, He who was rich, yet for our sake becomes poor, that we through His

¹ John xvii. 20.

² *Ibid.* xvii. 24.

poverty might be rich,¹ and that He might bring many sons and daughters into glory.² These He is not ashamed to call brethren, God's grand object in the redemption of believers being, indeed, by the powerful working of His Spirit eventually "to conform them to the image of His Son that He may be the firstborn among many brethren."³

We are now led back to God's great purpose of "gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth even in Him," because in connection with this purpose there is a place and a part reserved for this band of believers whom Christ is to call to Himself. For as we read, believers have in Him "obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to His will that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."⁴

In the first place, believers after they have been called to be with Christ, are destined to witness to the mercy and love of God. Because, "God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus—that *in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us through Christ Jesus.*"

The reminder that follows we thankfully accept.

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ Rom. viii. 29.

⁴ Eph. i. 9-12.

It is that by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves ; it is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast.

A gift of God—and a free gift, now being offered open-handedly, without money and without price to all who will accept.

X X I V

TO-DAY'S VENTURE OF FAITH

“**I** HAVE fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.”

Thus the great Apostle's sublime farewell ! “I have kept the faith !” Now has he kept it ? He has not omitted to proclaim, and he has loved the Lord's appearing. Therefore, he continues : “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only but to all them that love His appearing.”

The Apostle, by loving the Lord's appearing, was after all making the highest possible exercise of the three cardinal virtues, faith, hope and love. The highest, because directed towards their chief object, God Himself. In loving and proclaiming the appearing of the Lord Jesus, faith is shown—faith which rises superior to all the arguments of the world. It is the venture of faith of to-day.

In preaching only the other great truths concerning the Lord Jesus we meet with disagreement, but there is a firmly beaten track along which to proceed. To add the message of the Lord's appearing as an event marked by the signs of the times as imminent is a more or less new departure—a very real venture of faith. There are times

when God requires such a launching forth on sheer faith in His own Word, applied to the conscience of believers by His Spirit.

Thus to walk by faith is surely the call to believers at this day. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It has been substance and evidence enough for better folk than ourselves. That list of heroes of faith and their exploits should make us ready for a like boldness of faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. . . By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, because God had translated him, for before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him. . . . By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. . . ."

And the whole cloud of witnesses is assembled before us, and they being dead yet speak, challenging, appealing to us to render our service of faith also.

"Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."¹ "He who hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." Then let

¹ Tit. ii. 13.

this purifying hope be fanned to brighter flame, that it may purge away worldly cares and inclinations.

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words,” says the Apostle after he has explained the why and the how of the Lord’s coming to receive His own. What comfort and stimulation of hope of the Lord’s appearing there is among so many Christians in these days. This is in itself another sign of His coming. It is not for nothing that thousands of Christians scattered here, there and everywhere are independently arriving at the same conviction that the Lord Jesus will soon come. It positively amounts to a revival within the Church.

This expectancy, joyful as it is, is yet steady and serious. It is tested by careful reference, made individually and independently, by numbers of observers who come to the same conclusion.

Those who regard the Lord’s return as imminent are doing nothing sensational, are free from emotionalism; they are able to keep the coolest and most level heads because they have knowledge. What is more, they alone have hope, for other people know nothing of the coming of Him who is both the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings! The hope of the Lord’s appearing, what a strength it is!

“And now abideth faith, hope, love; these three, but the greatest of these is love.” The love of His appearing—that it is that wins a crown. Though we dared not for very joy have

faith in His appearing, or any hope of it—yet if we love His appearing, merely long for it as the perfect if unattainable boon, that is enough. To the love of His appearing are soon added the needful faith and hope.

So the heart-searching, the question that should be asked, is not—Do I believe in, do I hope for the Lord's appearing, His appearing? but—Do I want, do I love His appearing?

XXV

THAT BLESSED HOPE

BELIEF in the Lord's imminent return is very truly what the Bible calls it: that blessed hope. No stranger to the belief can understand the place it takes in the life, the light it throws upon the world-darkness, the ever-growing encouragement it gives in the individual life.

Not that those expectant of the coming of the Lord Jesus are buoyed up by any sense of their own superior righteousness. No! a very humbling hope is the blessed hope. It casts those who cherish it, off any righteousness of their own, on to the imputed righteousness of Christ. It impels them to trust in what He has done, is doing and will do to prepare His flock for the great reunion.

The love of Christ for His own is marvellous. Those first disciples, doubtless, seemed to on-lookers very badly chosen. Yet He loved them, in spite of all the weakness and sin which they had in common with the rest of mankind. He loved them in spite of desertion and even of denial; seeking them out after His return from death and the tomb and asking: "Peter, lovest thou Me?"

It was not what they were or could make of

themselves, but what He could make of them that the Lord had in view. It is the same with His disciples of to-day. He knows their shortcomings, but looking into their hearts He can read there the very words of shame-faced Peter : "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

If Jesus had waited to find disciples worthy of Himself He must have remained alone. The case is the same to-day. There is none righteous, none worthy ; no, not one. Therefore, upon these human briars has to be grafted a new life and a new nature, the divine graft of His own life and nature. Faith in Him is all He requires of the disciple as a condition of the grafting, and He is ready and able afterwards to provide for the health and growth of the engrafted life and nature.

There is now, at this hour, a living Jesus ; but many mistakes, failures, sins are committed by believers through inattention to Him, and reliance not upon Him but upon self. It may not be or seem to be a deliberate selfishness or self-will or defiance of His will ; but it is a going about to establish self-righteousness. This effort, while it lasts, operates to frustrate the righteousness of Christ.

The practical guide of the believer who hopes for the Lord's return is in the Epistle to the Philippians, where the Apostle, rejecting all righteousness of his own, desires to be found in Christ having the righteousness of God which is imputed to him, on condition of faith in Christ. Disclaiming all self-confident assurance of the

future, he puts behind him and forgets all his own past deeds, whether bad or good, and presses forward anew, reaching, straining forward, as would a racer, toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Once St. Paul, though he had become a Christian, had looked to himself for power to live a Christ-honouring and Christ-pleasing life; but he had found that the more he strove in that direction the more he met with disappointment and failure. "For what I would, that I do not, but what I hate, that I do."¹ That at last he realised by his practical experience that in Him as a believer, regenerate through faith in his Lord, there were two conflicting natures, and that the very presence of the new nature was an excitant to resistance by the old. It was only when he put himself under the guidance and protection of His good Shepherd, vigilant, powerful, though for the time unseen, that the inward conflict was abated, the old nature held in check, and the power of Christ became more and more manifest in the life of His follower.

Pending His return, the expectancy of it is invaluable as strengthening faith in the Lord's real continuing life and His power to guide His followers here on earth, provided they trust in Him for this.

Weakness of faith is unquestionably the Christian's greatest snare. Without any intention to err or fall short, Christians who are depending upon themselves will become befogged and enshoaled.

¹ Rom. vii. 15.

It is the lesson all have to learn.

“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the blood of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” The power of that life, here and now exerted in the behalf of His people, is what has to be realised, and the truth of the Lord’s imminent coming is increasingly helpful to that end, though at first it may not be so clearly seen from this point of view. The hope of the Second Coming also tends toward a truer sense of values, a greater detachment from minor concerns, and helps the believer to surrender his own personal inclinations where these conflict with the evident will of the Lord. And this surrender a believer has to make—and make ever more complete. If there is one thing more than another that proves the truth of Scriptural Christianity, is it not the identity of Christian experience—provided it be based upon faith in the Crucified Christ? Some make the journey more smoothly and quickly than others, but the path is the same, the obstacles the same, the milestones are the same, the fingerposts are the same. And what is more, those venerable saints who have travelled longest and farthest are the most resolute in clinging to the righteousness of Christ, and holding firmly to the one plea of justification that the blood of Christ was shed for them. Their gratitude for imputed righteousness has simply grown with the years.

“Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life.” Such is the injunction of the

returning Lord. Small as may be the attractions of surfeiting and drunkenness, the cares of this life do lead away many believers, especially in these times of world upheaval.

Here is the chief peril of the believer in the days that remain. Anxiety is a fearful distraction of the believer's mind and heart from the Lord whose imminent return demands their preoccupation with Him. It expresses want of faith, and "whatever is not of faith is sin."

Repeated, re-emphasised is the command, the appeal, "to cast your burden upon the Lord, for He careth for you." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The believer has a Shepherd. The divine offer to open up the way, to provide the needs of life is made. Therefore, fear and worry are excluded, forbidden. If the believer will do his part, the Lord will do His. This is with most people a main test of their faith, and it is long before some believers are equal to that test.

The case of Mary and Martha has some application here—the one choosing the good part and seeking first the knowledge of the Kingdom of God, as it was given to His hearers by the Lord Jesus, and the other with eye and ear and mind and heart turned away toward concerns which diverted her from the duty then and there required of her by her Lord. As though He were not then and now perfectly able to reconcile the "Mary" considerations and the "Martha" considerations,

so that both lines of duty should escape neglect !

The rule for believers we discover here : “ In nothing be anxious [be care-full or care-burdened about nothing]; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” ¹

Nothing to be a matter of worry ; everything to be laid before a protective and provident God, and aid besought. Thanks to be rendered for every benefit received. If this plan were followed and believers resorted to prayer instead of fretting and worrying, spiritual and material cares would give way to a peace passing all understanding. What believer has not discerned by experience that God has for him or her a plan, a path marked out, so that it need only be asked, “ Make Thy way plain before my face ” ? If by doubt or impatience the path is missed and the believer tries to cut one of his own, the result can only be disappointments, mistakes, and the path to be retraced.

Thus it behoves the believer to avoid the eleventh-hour, pre-Advent evil of a heart overcharged with care and thus sinning by want of faith.

To the Righteous One whose coming draws near, there is this word to be said—“ Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”

For in His righteousness is the believers’ hope, and prophetically is given the believers’ song of

¹ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

thankfulness after their hope is fulfilled : “Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.” Human nature will have no title to glory in its own fancied merits. The inheritance of the believers will proceed entirely from the sacrifice and merits of the Lord Jesus and the grace of God within. Believers are “to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

XXVI

RESURRECTION AND LIFE

“**I** AM the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.”¹

The truth of the Lord's return to receive His own, is needed to illuminate the meaning of those words: “He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” “Believers who are alive when I come, will not die” is the plain English of it. Now when the Lord returns He will, as we have seen, appear first to believers whom He will come to call out of the world, as being peculiarly His own, as being the special and precious reward of His past affliction, humiliation and sacrifice. That He should so value them may well seem strange, but it must be remembered that the work to be finally wrought in believers is of God and not of themselves. It is a work of re-creation whose result will not be manifest until due time. “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear [it is not yet made manifest] what we shall be,” says St. John; “but we know that when we see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”² Such is the working of the creative power “whereby He is able to subdue

¹ John xi. 25.

² 1 John iii. 2.

all things unto Himself," that the believer will be impressed with the image and likeness of his Saviour and Lord, by the fact of beholding Him.

Here is the inspired account of what will happen when He comes again to gather His followers: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God—and the dead in Christ shall rise first." "Though he were dead, yet shall he live," as we saw at the head of this chapter.

The next part of the promise is this: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air, and so shall be for ever with the Lord."

Accordingly, "he that liveth," he who is alive at that time, "shall never die." As we have it again: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Then "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Not as disembodied spirits, but clothed upon with bodies like unto His glorious body, will the companions of Christ enter into their new life, home and work. "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds"—and there is another flesh of the new humanity of regenerate humanity in resurrection.

The bondage of death—the grave, corruption—is hateful to mankind; instinct tells them it is abnormal, an aberration from the proper course of things. But they are slow to accept the Biblical revelation of the spiritual cause of death: “Death is the wages of sin,” of alienation, going astray from God. It is the Nemesis that waits upon rebellion against God; the human creation cannot receive the needed current of life from the Creator. So that humanity is as a severed branch by the wayside.

The mission of the Son of God to human beings is to put them in vital relation with the Godhead. Just as He in His humanity, which He took upon Himself in incarnation, triumphed over death, so can He make others triumph.

Resurrection and translation are quite foreign to the human mind, but birth and death, night and day, summer and winter, would have been equally foreign and incredible to the human mind if these phenomena had in human experience been replaced by other phenomena.

Let us turn away then from dim and flickering human impressions and to the steady radiance of that message: “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

The miraculous withdrawal of His people from the scene of the coming world-storm will make good the Lord’s promise that—“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”¹

¹ Rev. iii. 10.

XXVII

GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

ALL the promises of God in Jesus Christ the Son of God are Yea and Amen—sure and doubly sure to be fulfilled. As the moment comes to lay down the pen, all these promises crowd upon my mind in their richness. But let me point in reminder to these !

The promise given to the disciples, a second time bereft as they watched Him carried upward, was : “ This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” This echoed the Lord’s own assurance, “ If I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Finally, there is the sublime promise given through Daniel, that at the time appointed—and the time, as we have seen, is near—transgression having been finished, and an end made of sin, reconciliation having been made for iniquity, then Everlasting Righteousness will be brought in.

Then will God have accompanied His purpose of gathering together in one, all things in Christ, who is Himself that Everlasting Righteousness.

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